

*The*  
DIVINE  
AUTHORITY  
*of the*  
BIBLE



**Benjamin Keach**  
(1640-1704)

# THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

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# THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

## Introduction

The main scope of this work<sup>1</sup> being to investigate and explain the true meaning of the Holy Scriptures, it will be helpful...to say something first about the divine authority of that blessed book. The Scripture is commonly owned by Christians to be the Word of God, but, on one hand, there are too many amongst us, especially in this atheistic age, whose love of sin and purpose to continue in it tempt them to look for shelter in bold contempt of or subtle objections against those heavenly oracles. On the other hand, many poor souls are shaken with temptations and know not how to free themselves from frequent ensnaring questions about the divine original and authority of those sacred records. This is not so much from disagreement with these truths, as it is from a poor understanding of the reasons for believing them, and the true basis of that belief. Therefore, we shall set forth some considerations proving this most important truth. [Our goal is] that with full assurance about our present and future welfare, we may rely on that book as the infallible storehouse of heavenly truth, that great and only revelation whereby God informs, rules, and will judge the world. Because others have recently written learned and excellent works on this subject, we will be more concise; and, though we have said little, yet we hope we have said enough to satisfy any thoughtful man and answer the vain objections of the adversary. All along in this essay we strive to join clarity with brevity, and to speak so plainly and familiarly that the weakest capacity may easily gather it up. The neglect of plain speaking has made other books on the same subject less serviceable to the unlearned reader. It is our primary purpose to help and establish the unskillful, and to assist weak Christians, knowing that if Satan can once bring them into a distrust of the truth and authority of God's Word, he at the same time shakes the very

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<sup>1</sup> The text of this booklet originally appeared as the preface to Benjamin Keach's *Tropologia: A Key to Open Scripture Metaphors* (the "work" referred to here).

foundation of all their hope and religion. “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Psa 11:3).

## 1. Sublime Contents

That the Scripture or book called the Bible is of divine original, inspired by the Spirit of God, and therefore of infallible truth and authority, appears by the contents or matters revealed and treated. These are so transcendently sublime and mysterious that they could never be the product of human invention or discovery. Therefore, though they were written by men as instruments, they must needs be revealed from above.

What human brain could ever have imagined a Trinity in the Deity (Mat 28:19; 1Jo 5:7)? Or such an existence of one simple essence as this book acquaints us with? It describes the person of Christ so plainly, appropriately, and excellently that if the mind of man consider it attentively, it must acknowledge it far exceeds the reach of a finite understanding. It reveals to us the misery and corruption of man by nature, together with the [widespread effects of the Fall on] the whole creation. Though some of the heathen had some glimpse of this corruption and [its effects], they could never find out the cause, nor how it came to pass. No finite intellect could ever have travelled into the heights and depths of the nature of God and His eternal counsels, that astonishing contrivance for the salvation of men, that the second Person should descend from heaven and assume human nature into a conjunction with the divine, take upon Him in His own Person the sin of mankind, and die for the world, thereby making a satisfaction proportionate to infinite justice, so that God may show the utmost act of mercy, in a conjunction with the highest exercise of justice. Nothing less than an infinite understanding could have found out arrangements to reconcile those two infinite attributes in His dealings with an apostate creature. It unfolds the covenant of grace, which God made after the Fall, all which can be drawn from no other fountain but divine revelation (1Co 2:7; Eph 3:4-5).

It contains the law of God, which is wise and just, the Gentiles themselves being judges (Dan 4:5-7). In its precepts shines forth its [divine origin]: 1. The surpassing excellency of the act, requiring that we should deny ourselves in all those things which the corrupt nature of man cleaveth to and hateth to forego. 2. The wonderful equity that doth appear in every command. 3. The admirable strangeness of some acts, which a natural man would account foolishness, and yet prescribed as absolutely necessary, shows its divine original (Joh 3:36; 8:24). 4. The

manner how obedience is required: that it proceeds from a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned (Deu 6:5; 1Co 13:1; 1Ti 1:4-5). Take a view of the ten commandments. Are they not plain, brief, perfect, just, extending to all, binding the conscience, and reaching to the very thoughts? And do not all these things commend to us the justice, wisdom, holiness, omnipotence, omniscience, perfection, and absolute sovereignty of the Lawmaker?

It is a book that covers the entire history of the world, past, present, and to come. Its contents reach as far as the first foundations of the earth and heavens, give us an account of God's revelations to man ever since his first creation, and the particulars of interaction between God and the world, for nearly two thousand five hundred years before they were anywhere extant upon record. What other book since the world began so much as pretended to do this? As it was in the process of being written for sixteen hundred years (for it was that long from the time of Moses till John closed it with the Revelation), so the matters it deals with are of the most excellent nature and highest importance.

This book gives the world a satisfactory account not only of its origin, but of its end too. It acquaints man with his true supreme happiness and a most wonderful and astonishing method of reconciliation with his Maker. Its promises are everlasting glory and never-fading crowns. Its precepts are perfect righteousness (Gal 3:10), and altogether such as tend most to the honor of God, the happiness of a man's self, and the quiet of the world. It threatens miseries that are endless. Its whole tendency is to a prospect beyond the grave. What heathen ever so much as dreamed of the resurrection? Who but the Lord could be author of such laws that only can give eternal life and inflict eternal death? These things move the conscience only of those who acknowledge its precepts to be divine. In a word, its general subjects are mysteries unheard of anywhere else, and inconceivable, without being revealed in the book. Now, considering all this, what less than infinite Wisdom can be thought to be the author of such a book?

## **2. Antiquity**

That the Bible is inspired by the Spirit of God, and therefore infallible, appears by its antiquity. The books of Moses, wherein the sum and substance of all the rest of the Bible is comprised in promises, prophecies, types, and shadows, were the first writings in the world, next to those by

the finger of God on Mount Sinai. This is fully proved by Justin Martyr,<sup>2</sup> an ancient writer, that lived within one hundred and thirty years after Christ, in his *Exhortation to the Greeks*.<sup>3</sup> He compared the times of all human writers, poets, philosophers, historians, and lawgivers who were esteemed to be most ancient, and he demonstrated them all to be later than Moses. Eusebius<sup>4</sup> also, who followed Justin Martyr at about two hundred years distance, in the second and third books of his evangelical preparation, makes the same argument, and from abundance of testimonies and confessions, out of the best and most authentic heathen authors themselves, undeniably proves that Moses was the most ancient of all the writers that were known or named amongst them. And Tertullian so confidently upbraids the Gentiles in this matter that we think it appropriate to quote his words in the 19th chapter of his Apology.

Speaking to the heathens, he says,

Our religion far outdoes all that you can boast of in that kind: for the books of one of our prophets only, namely, Moses, wherein it seems God hath enclosed, as in a treasury, all the Christian religion preceding so many ages together, reach beyond the ancientest you have, even all your public monuments, the antiquity of your originals, the establishments of your estates, the foundations of your cities, all that are most advanced by you in all ages in history, and memory of times: the invention even of the characters, which are interpreters of sciences, and the guardians of all things excellent. I think I may say more, they are elder than your very gods, your temples, oracles, and sacrifices.

Have you not heard mention made of that great prophet, Moses? He was cotemporary with Inachus,<sup>5</sup> and preceded Danaus<sup>6</sup> (the ancientest of all that have a name in your histories) 393 years. He lived some hundreds of years before the ruin of Troy. [And Homer, the eldest writer amongst the Grecians, lived, as Pliny saith, 250 years after the subversion of that city.] Every of the other prophets succeeded Moses, and yet the last of them was of

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<sup>2</sup> **Justin Martyr** (c. 100-c. 165) – early Christian apologist and philosopher.

<sup>3</sup> *Exhortation to the Greeks* is an early Christian Greek document, formerly attributed to Justin Martyr, but more recently attributed to other possible authors.

<sup>4</sup> **Eusebius** (c. 260-339) – Greek historian of Christianity, exegete, and Christian polemicist.

<sup>5</sup> **Inachus** – first king of Argos.

<sup>6</sup> **Danaus** – king of Libya.

the same age as your prime wisemen, lawgivers, and historians were.

So it is indisputable that for antiquity, neither the writings of Orpheus,<sup>7</sup> or Homer,<sup>8</sup> or Trismegistus,<sup>9</sup> or Pythagoras,<sup>10</sup> or Berosus,<sup>11</sup> nor any other can compare with the Pentateuch. These gray hairs show the Scriptures to be the offspring of the Ancient of Days; for truth is always the firstborn.

Consider how low, how mean,<sup>12</sup> and imperfect all human inventions were in those times; and what foolish, irrational, and absurd conceptions both the Egyptians and Grecians, nations most celebrated for wisdom, had of things divine and the duty and happiness of man. We must conclude that such a clear account of the world's beginning, depravation, destruction by the Flood, and repeopling; such a most excellent law and doctrine, in reference both to God and man, etc., could not be of human extract, but must needs be in truth what it asserts itself to be—a divine revelation. Besides, who can believe the first religion should be the worst, or the earliest notions of God the falsest? Were this so, and the Bible not a divine book, but composed by impostors, then it follows that the most primitive account we have of religion is counterfeit! That the devil set up his chapel before God built His church. That in the earliest notices we have of God, of the world's original, man's Fall, and the way of his recovery, the world is deceived and abused. And that God suffered the devil, in the first place, (and without any thing publicly extant from Him, either before or since, to contradict it), in His name, and under pretense of His authority, to delude and mislead mankind, with a false account of all those things which they are most concerned to know, and upon the right knowledge of which their present and future happiness depends! This is all unworthy of God and inconsistent with reason. On the contrary, it is most rational to believe that God's revelations were as early as man's necessities; and that the Bible is not only the most ancient and

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<sup>7</sup> **Orpheus** – Thracian bard, legendary musician, and prophet.

<sup>8</sup> **Homer** (born c. 8<sup>th</sup> century BC) – Greek poet credited as author of *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

<sup>9</sup> **Hermes Trismegistus** – legendary Hellenistic figure that originated as a syncretic combination of the Greek god Hermes and the Egyptian god Thoth.

<sup>10</sup> **Pythagoras of Samos** (c. 570-c. 495 BC) – ancient Ionian Greek philosopher and the eponymous founder of Pythagoreanism.

<sup>11</sup> **Berosus** (fl. 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC) – Hellenistic-era Babylonian writer, priest of Bel Marduk, and astronomer.

<sup>12</sup> **mean** – common; ordinary.

wisest book in the world, but also the truest, and that it proceeded from the God of truth.

### 3. Majesty and Authority of Style

This royal descent or divinity of the Scriptures further appears by that majesty and authoritativeness of the Spirit of God speaking in them, and that extraordinary and inimitable style wherein they are written. As it is said of our blessed Lord, “That he taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Mat 7:29), so the Scriptures teach with an awe-inspiring authority. The style of the sacred Scripture is unique and has peculiar properties not elsewhere to be found; its simplicity is joined with majesty, commanding the veneration of all serious men. Augustine says that the holy Scriptures seemed rude and unpolished to him in comparison of Cicero’s adorned style, because he did not then understand its inward beauty.<sup>13</sup> But when he was converted to Christianity, he declared that when he understood them, no writing appeared more wise and eloquent.<sup>14</sup> Gregory Nazianzen,<sup>15</sup> a man of exceptional wit, learning, and eloquence, when he came to study the sacred Scriptures, vilifies all ornaments of literature amongst the Greek philosophers as infinitely below those divine oracles.<sup>16</sup> Illyricus says that—although we find not in the holy Scripture that idle or delicate itch of words, that external sweetness or allurements, that variety of sounds, or those pleasing trifles, which vain-glorious orators of Greece and Rome beautified their famous speeches with—yet we find there a grave and masculine eloquence, exceeding all others. And shall we indeed think that the great God would use inductions<sup>17</sup> as Plato?<sup>18</sup> Syllogisms<sup>19</sup> as Aristotle?<sup>20</sup> Elenchs<sup>21</sup> as the

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<sup>13</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 3, Chapter 5.

<sup>14</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, Book 4, Chapter 6.

<sup>15</sup> **Gregory Nazianzen** (c. 329-390) – 4<sup>th</sup> century Archbishop of Constantinople and theologian.

<sup>16</sup> Budaeus, *De asse, et partibus ejus*, Book 5, p. 754.

<sup>17</sup> **induction** – in logic and rhetoric, the act of drawing a consequence from two or more propositions, which are called premises.

<sup>18</sup> **Plato** (c. 428-c. 348 BC) – ancient Greek philosopher born in Athens during the Classical period in Ancient Greece.

<sup>19</sup> **syllogisms** – arguments consisting of three propositions, of which the first two are called the premises, the last the conclusion.

<sup>20</sup> **Aristotle** (384-322 BC) – ancient Greek philosopher and polymath.

<sup>21</sup> **elenchs** – deceptive arguments under the appearance of truth.

Carneades?<sup>22</sup> Epiphonemas<sup>23</sup> as Cicero?<sup>24</sup> Subtleties as Seneca?<sup>25</sup> Or words far-fetched, joined together with an artificial syntax relating to weight, number, and sound? If a royal edict were published in that kind of speech, consisting of school-follies, every wise man would laugh at it. The more plain therefore the word and law of the great God is, it is, we say, the more fitting for the Author thereof and an evidence of His divine stamp and authority. Yet in that humility of style in Scripture there is far more height and loftiness, and more profoundness in its simplicity, more beauty in its nakedness, and more vigor and acuteness in its seeming rudeness, than in those other things men so much praise and admire. Easiness and plainness fit the best truth. A pearl needs no painting. It is below the majesty of a prince to play the orator. In the holy Scripture is a peculiar and admirable eloquence. What are all the elaborate blandishments of human writers to that grave, lively, and venerable majesty of the prophet Isaiah's style, as the exordium<sup>26</sup> of his prophecy shows, also in chapters 25, 26, etc. That which critics admire in Homer, Pindar,<sup>27</sup> etc., singly, are universally found here, though not that elegancy that tickles the ear and fancy and relishes with the flesh, but the noble and immortal part, an illuminated soul. Commandments are here given forth and subjection peremptorily required with great severity and with no stronger arguments than the will of the Lawmaker. Promises above likelihood are made. No other reason is alleged to assure that the promise will be performed except, "I the Lord have spoken" (Isa 51:22; 52:4). And to encourage against difficulties divine assistance is promised, both as necessary and sufficient, in the manner of its threats (Gen 17:1; Exo 12, Jos 1:9). Also the divinity of the style may be observed in that, without respect of persons, all degrees of men are concerned, high and low, rich and poor, noble and ignoble, kings and peasants, commanding what is distasteful to their natures, and forbidding what they approve. It

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<sup>22</sup> **Carneades** (c. 214-129 BC) – Greek philosopher and perhaps most prominent head of the Sceptical Academy in ancient Greece.

<sup>23</sup> **epiphonema** – an exclamation in oratory.

<sup>24</sup> **Cicero** (106-43 BC) – Roman statesman, lawyer, scholar, philosopher, and academic skeptic.

<sup>25</sup> **Seneca the Younger** (c. 4 BC-65 AD) – Stoic philosopher of Ancient Rome, statesman, dramatist, and satirist.

<sup>26</sup> **exordium** – preface; introduction.

<sup>27</sup> **Pindar** (c. 518 BC-c. 438 BC) – ancient Greek lyric poet from Thebes.

promises not earthly honor, but life everlasting. It threatens not with rack and gibbet,<sup>28</sup> but eternal pain and torment in hellfire.

Of all writings in the world, the sacred Scriptures assume most unto themselves. They tell us that they are the “words of eternal life” (Joh 6:68); that they are by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost the testimony of Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness; that they shall judge the world; that they are able to make wise unto salvation (2Ti 3:16; Rev 3:14); that they are the immortal seed, of which the sons and daughters of God must be begotten (1Pe 1:23). Their terror is, “Thus saith the Lord”; and no conclusion except, “The Lord hath spoken; Hear the word of the Lord; He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Exo 20:1-2).

The nature, quality, or composure of the style, we say, is emphatically different from that of all human writings whatsoever. Here are no apologies, begging pardon of the reader, or insinuating into his good opinion by devices of rhetoric, but a stately plainness, and mysterious simplicity. “We also speak,” saith the apostle in 1 Corinthians 2:13, “not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost...comparing [or rather suiting or fitting, *sugkrinontes*] spirituals with spirituals”—for so only the original runs: *pneumatika pneumatikois*. That is, matter or things that for their nature and substance are spiritual with words or phrases which are spiritual also and suitable to them. Hence, says Augustine, “The Scripture so speaketh that with the height of it, it laughs proud and lofty-spirited men to scorn; with the depth of it, it terrifies those who with attention look into it; with the truth of it, it feeds men of the greatest knowledge and understanding; and with the sweetness of it, it nourisheth babes and sucklings.”

## 4. Spirit of Holiness

That excellent spirit of holiness, which everywhere breathes in and from the Scriptures, is another fair mark of the hand of God in framing them. To this holiness they most powerfully persuade men by express commands: “Ye shall be holy; for I am holy” (Lev 11:44). “As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1Pe 1:15). And by threatenings: “Without [holiness] no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). And by a multitude of examples of holy men, as Abraham, David, and all the prophets and apostles, and especially of that

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<sup>28</sup> **rack** – device for punishing criminals by stretching their bodies; **gibbet** – gallows for hanging a criminal for execution or for public display after execution.

immaculate Lamb of God, the blessed Jesus. On the other side, it sets before us the dreadful vengeance that attends all profaneness, unrighteousness, uncleanness, pride, and worldly lusts. It not only requires an abstinence from the gross outward acts of sin, but searches the heart and condemns the very thoughts and inclinations: “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer” (1Jo 3:15). “He that lusteth after a woman hath committed adultery” (see Mat 5:28). The doctrine taught everywhere in this book is directly opposite to the world of debauched and wicked men. It destroys all impiety and corrupt doctrines and practices. It perfectly ruins and destroys the interests of the devil in the world. This doctrine shows the highest tendency to the two great ends of all religion, the honor of God and man’s present and future happiness. What pitiful, crooked, and imperfect lines have the wisest and best of mere men—as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Tully,<sup>29</sup> Seneca, Plutarch,<sup>30</sup> or any others—drawn in their fairest documents, both moral and divine, compared with this complete and transcendent rule of holy living! What undefiled religion, what pure and spiritual worship is here! How suitable to the holy nature of God! What superlative piety and virtue, without any spot of vice! What punctual and perpetual truth and honesty is here required, yet without the least taint of base means or unworthy sordid ends! No vain-glory! No esteem of men! No corrupt advantages! But on the contrary, what charity is here required! What repeated commands not to offend weak ones! What mutual forgiveness! What provocations to love! With what patience and meekness, justice and modesty, are we taught to behave ourselves! In a word, it is such a doctrine as makes a man perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work. It brings men to the best way of living, the noblest way of suffering, and the most comfortable way of dying. Now, must not such pure streams flow from the Fountain of all perfection? Does such a serious and effectual advancement of holiness in the world look like something plotted by polluted man or any unclean spirit? How can we better judge of a law that declares it proceeds from God and is of divine obligation than by its nature, tendency, and influence on human life? By whether it is suitable to those claims and such an adorable and unspotted original? And when we find so holy and excellent a design as appears throughout this whole book, for the honor of God, and completing the happiness of men, by methods so agreeable, and yet above the reach of human invention—what can we judge, unless we are

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<sup>29</sup> **Tully** – another name for Cicero.

<sup>30</sup> **Plutarch** (c. AD 46-119) – Greek Middle Platonist philosopher, historian, biographer, essayist, and priest.

obstinately perverse, but that such a book's testimony of itself is true, and that it is indeed of God, and not of men?

## **5. Agreement of All Its Parts**

We find a sweet and admirable agreement, consent, dependence, and harmony in all and every part of Scripture. There are so many books in it written by so many different persons, of various conditions, separated from each other by many years, in various places, and in different languages, yet all agreeing with each other, and every part with the whole. [This unity] could not be foreseen or contrived by any human wisdom or cunning in the writing of any one part. All the histories, prophecies, promises, types, and doctrines tend to promote the same thing in an orderly connection. Every age is a fresh interpreter and reveals to us more and more of this admirable unity that could not be the result of human skill nor of any other cause except an infinite comprehension and foresight. The various writers of this book were in all times guided in what they wrote by the supreme wisdom of that one God Who never changes, "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb 13:8).

## **6. Sincerity of Its Penmen**

[That the Scriptures are the Word of God] further appears from the credit and sincerity of its penmen. If the Scriptures were not what they claim to be, the Word of God, and were not dictated to the writers thereof by His Holy Spirit, it would be the greatest offense to the Divine Majesty and the worst fraud towards mankind that ever was put upon the world.

But if we consider its penmen, we shall find them all of undoubted credit, generally esteemed holy and good men in the ages they lived in, so no way to be suspected of imposture. Some of them were kings of the deepest learning, not likely to be guilty of such a mean-spirited baseness as lying and forgery. Many of the prophets and most of the apostles were men illiterate, of parts and education so mean that of themselves they seem incapable of writing so profoundly or laying such a clever plan for deluding the world. It is unbelievable that so many men, of such distant times, qualities, and abilities should all agree in the same deception, and so harmonize in promoting it. Neither could any interest or ambition prompt them to do so, because the main tendency of this book is to mortify men's ambitions and lusts. And most of them exposed themselves to great hazards and persecutions by publishing these writings. Nor have several of them been shy to record the great failings and imperfections of

themselves and their brethren. Moses relates his own faithlessness and reluctance to submit to the extraordinary call of God (Exo 3). In another place, he records the shame of his distrustfulness, or at least the carnality of his conceit or low view of the power of God (Num 11:21). Again, he inserts God's heavy sentence, and the reason for it, against himself (Num 20:12). The same Moses did not set up any of his own posterity to succeed him in the guidance of Israel, but left Joshua to succeed him, and placed the kingly superiority over that people in another tribe from his own, the tribe of Judah. Indeed, throughout the whole book there is a visible antipathy to all self-seeking flattery or compliance. God alone is exalted, and all men's persons, actions, and reputations are laid in the dust in response to His honor and the truths delivered in it. Besides, these very writers appear to be in submission to the doctrine they taught, and no way masters of it, as [if it were] their own. All this plainly shows that they were inspired from above and wrote not their own words, nor for their own honor, but as inspired, and for the honor of God.

## 7. Exact Fulfilment of Prophecies

Another demonstration or proof that the Scriptures are from God is the exact and punctual fulfilling of the prophecies contained in it. To foretell events is the prerogative of God. "Let them bring them forth"—saith God, the Lord expostulating with His people about the vanity of idols—"and shew us what shall happen: let them shew...the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods" (Isa 41:22-23). Now, the body of the Scriptures is enlivened with the Spirit of prophecy, almost throughout.

Moses recorded Jacob's prophecy that "the sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen 49:10). This was not completely fulfilled until about two thousand years later, though it was made good during a great part of that time by the entrance of the tribe of Judah into government with king David until its going out again in the person of Hircanus,<sup>31</sup> whom Herod slew, as Josephus testifies. But when the appointed time came, the prophecy itself was completely fulfilled. When Herod, a stranger from another nation, had cut off the house and line of Judah from the government of Jewry, then and at that time Shiloh, the long expected Messiah, our Lord Christ, punctually came into the world. The Jewish Rabbis do not deny that *Shiloh* means the Messiah.

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<sup>31</sup> **John Hyrcanus II** (died 30 BC) – member of the Hasmonean dynasty and Jewish High Priest in 1<sup>st</sup> century BC.

Now at the time of Jacob's uttering these words, there was little probability that *any* of his posterity should have a scepter or any kingly power. They were poor, few, and in a strange land. Even if they should thrive so as to become a kingdom or nation, why should Judah have the government? There were three brothers older than he: Reuben, Simeon, and Levi. Nor was there likelihood of this prophecy's being accomplished when Moses set it down in writing. At that time, he himself, who was of the tribe of Levi, was in the actual possession of the government, and put into it by God Himself. For his successor, Moses appointed Joshua of the tribe of Ephraim, not of the tribe of Judah. From all this, we have a notable evidence of the truth and sincerity of this prediction. If Jacob had not really uttered it, we cannot imagine Moses would have put such a prophecy in writing to the disparagement of his own tribe.

How accurately are the four great monarchies of the world described by Daniel? (See Dan 7:3.) So true to life as if he had lived under them and experienced them all in order, just as the world has afterward.

How wonderful is that prophecy of Isaiah (chapters 44 and 45) about Cyrus, delivered at least one hundred years—some say two hundred—before he was born? He is not only expressly named—"Thus saith the Lord to his anointed Cyrus"—but it is foretold he should conquer Babylon and rebuild the temple of Jerusalem, which came to pass accordingly. Nor can this prophecy be suspected of forgery...since it was pronounced openly, as other prophecies were, in the hearing of all the people and so committed into many hands before the captivity and then also carried into Babylon, where no doubt it was pursued by many, long before the accomplishment of it. And that there was such a man as Cyrus many years afterwards who conquered Babylon and restored the Jews from their captivity and furthered the building of the temple, all heathen authors who write of that period do affirm. Indeed, one great motive of his kindness to the Jews was because he understood how his successes had been thus prophesied of, so long before, by one of that nation. Thus it appears that the said prophecy was then publicly known, and its truth and authenticity were not in doubt.

How plainly are the many prophecies of the Old Testament concerning our Savior fulfilled. And how dreadfully His prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem was made good about forty years after His crucifixion. We find it in the history of Josephus, corresponding exactly to what is foretold in Matthew 24. And how many other prophecies of the New Testament, and especially of Revelation, do we daily find verified in and by the apostacy and wicked usurpations of the church of Rome.

To foretell so plainly such remote particulars and events that depend on the mere motions and acts of future persons' wills is an evident mark of omniscience. Therefore, we are forced to conclude that the Scriptures, that are filled with so many evident and certain predictions, must certainly proceed from the finger of God.

## 8. Confirmed by Miracles

Those writings and that doctrine that were confirmed by many and real miracles must be of God. And the books and doctrines of the canonical Scriptures were so confirmed. The Lord openly worked many and great wonders, such as Satan himself cannot imitate, such as exceed the power of any—yea, of all—the creatures in the world. The most malicious enemies could not deny [these wonders] to be divine. He wrought [these wonders] by the hands of Moses and the prophets, Christ and His apostles, for the confirmation of this truth (Num 11:9; Exo 19:16; 1Ki 17:24; Mar 16:20; Act 5:12). These miracles were recorded and attested by eye and ear witnesses of unquestionable credit. The things done were matters of fact, easy to be discerned, as raising the dead to life, curing the blind, etc. They were not done once or twice, but very often; not in the night, or in a corner, but in the open light, in the midst of the people, in the presence of great multitudes, who were generally enemies to those that wrought these miracles. If the record of them were false, they would presently have disproved them; or if there had been any deceit, they would soon have detected it.

“When God puts forth His miracle-working power, in the confirmation of any word or doctrine, He avows it to be of and from Himself, to be absolutely and infallibly true; setting the fullest and openest seal unto it, which men, who cannot discern His essence or being, are capable of receiving or discerning. And therefore when any doctrine, which in itself is such as becometh the holiness and righteousness of God, is confirmed by the emanation of His divine power in working of miracles, there can no greater assurance, even by God Himself, be given to confirm the truth of it.”<sup>32</sup>

And as we have the testimony of the evangelists to confirm the many miracles that Jesus did, we also plead the notoriety of those miracles wrought by Him, and the traditions delivering them down to us. They

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<sup>32</sup> John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistles to the Hebrews with Preliminary Exercitations in The Works of John Owen*, vol. 10, ed. William Goold (Philadelphia: The Leighton Publications, 1869), 411.

were openly wrought, and “were all or most of them performed before the eyes of multitudes who envied, hated, and persecuted Him, and that in the most knowing days of the world, when reason and learning had improved the light of the minds of men to the utmost of their capacity; in and upon multitudes for sundry years together, being all of them sifted by His adversaries, to try if they could discover anything of deceit in them.”<sup>33</sup>

Besides, the very enemies have not had the impudence to deny such well-attested matters of fact as our Savior’s miracles. They only ascribe them to other causes.

Even to this day, the Jews acknowledge much of the works of Christ, but slanderously and blasphemously ascribe them to the power of the devil, or to the force of the name of God sewed up in His thigh, among other similarly ridiculous stories.

Even the Turks<sup>34</sup> confess much of the miracles of our Lord and believe Him to be a great prophet, though they are professed enemies to the Christian name. Nor could all the adversaries of these miracles and their records, with all their arguments or violence, hinder thousands from believing them, and even exposing their lives on that belief, in the very time and country where they were done. So that we must say that either they were miracles or they were not. If they were, why do you not believe? If they were not, behold the greatest miracle of all! That so many thousands (even of the beholders) should be so blind as to believe things that never were, especially in the very times when it was the easiest matter in the world to have disproved such falsehoods. Indeed, the miracles of Jesus and of His disciples and servants, in the early times, were in fact so many, so eminent, so visible, and lasted so long (for they continued in the church two or three hundred years), and the account of them has descended down to us by such a constant, uninterrupted, written and unwritten tradition, that scarce any man has assumed impudence enough to gainsay them. Irenaeus<sup>35</sup> (who lived about the year of our Lord 200) affirmeth that in his time the working of miracles, the raising of the dead, the casting out of devils, healing the sick by mere laying on of hands, and prophesying were still in force; and that some that were so raised from the dead remained alive amongst them long

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<sup>33</sup> Owen, 413.

<sup>34</sup> **Turks** – Muslims.

<sup>35</sup> **Irenaeus** (c. 130-c. 202 AD) – Greek bishop noted for his role in guiding and expanding Christian communities in the southern regions of present-day France.

after. And Cyprian<sup>36</sup> and Tertullian<sup>37</sup> mention the ordinary casting out of devils and challenge the heathen to come and see it. Remarkable are those words of the latter: “Let anyone be brought before your tribunals who is apparently possessed with a devil, that spirit being commanded by any Christian shall confess of truth himself to be a devil, as at other times he boasts himself a god.”<sup>38</sup> And in his book to Scapula, the procurator of Africa, chapter 4, he repeats several miraculous cures done by Christians: “How many persons of good quality and esteem,” says he, “for we speak not of the vulgar sort, have been remedied either from devils or diseases?” Severus himself, the father of Antoninus, was recovered by Christians, etc. [These all demonstrate] that here we have the best doctrine under the highest attestation, with God Himself setting on it His supernatural seals to convince us of its truth. And this was the great argument by which Christ convinced the world all along: for upon His beginning of miracles, at Cana in Galilee, He “manifested...his glory; and his disciples believed on him” (Joh 2:11). The Jews therefore enquired for signs as that which must confirm any new revelation to be of God (Joh 2:18). And though Christ blames them for their unreasonable unsatisfied expectations herein, and would not humor them in each particular, yet He continued to give them miracles as great as they desired. They that saw the miracles of the loaves said, “This is of a truth the prophet that should come into the world” (Joh 6:14). “Many believed, when they saw the miracles which he did” (see Joh 2:23; 10:41; Act 4:16; Heb 2:4). “If I had not done the works that no man else could do, ye had not had sin” in not believing (see Joh 15:24). And the way of bringing men to believe in these days is expressed in Hebrews 2:3-4: “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by those that heard him [there is the evidence of sense to the first receivers, and their tradition to the next]; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles?” Let us conclude this argument with the pointed question of that blind man: “Can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?” (Joh 9:16). Natural reason shows us that God is the true and merciful Governor of the world; therefore the course of nature cannot be altered except by His special appointment. He will never set the seal of His omnipotence on a lie, nor allow the last and greatest motive to belief to be used to draw men to embrace falsehood and forgeries.

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<sup>36</sup> **Cyprian** (c. 210-258 AD) – bishop of Carthage and early Christian writer.

<sup>37</sup> **Tertullian** (c. 155-c. 220 AD) – prolific early Christian author from Carthage, Africa.

<sup>38</sup> Tertullian, *Apology*, chapter 31.

## 9. Preservation of the Scriptures

To these astonishing miracles we may fitly add the preservation of these holy writings for so many ages. This is also little less than miraculous, and such as is a great argument that these writings belong to God as the Author and Parent of them. When God has exercised a peculiar care for this book, it is reasonable to attribute it to God, as a book of His own dictating. Were the Bible not what it claims to be, it would have been suitable to the nature of God and fitting for divine Providence for the Bible to be blotted out of the world long ago. Why would He allow a book to continue from the beginning of times that falsely pretended His name and authority? Scholars complain of time swallowing up the works of many excellent authors. They bewail the loss of some of Livy's<sup>39</sup> Decades and other choice books that are now nowhere to be found! In fact, though the Romans were so careful for the preservation of the books of the Sybils<sup>40</sup> that they locked them up safely and appointed special officers to guard them, yet they perished many ages ago, and only a few fragments remain.

By contrast, the Bible has held up its head. Part of it was the first book in the world (as we proved in the second argument), and the craft of Satan and the rage of mankind have from time to time combined utterly to suppress it. Yet it remains, not only extant, but whole and entire without the least mutilation or corruption. Antiochus Epiphanes,<sup>41</sup> when he set up the abomination of desolation in the Jewish temple, in the days of Maccabees,<sup>42</sup> with utmost diligence searched for copies of their law. Wherever he found it, he immediately burned or destroyed it. He threatened death with horrible tortures to anyone who concealed or retained it. In like manner, about the year 300 after Christ, the tyrant Diocletian<sup>43</sup> fully purposed to root out Christianity forever from the world. He published an edict that the Scriptures should everywhere be burned and destroyed and whoever should presume to keep them should be most severely tormented. Yet God did not permit them to quench the light of these divine laws. But more than two hundred years before the incarnation of Christ the Old Testament was translated into Greek, the most flourishing and spreading language at that time in the world. About

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<sup>39</sup> **Livy** (59 BC-AD 17) – Roman historian.

<sup>40</sup> **Sybils** – prophetesses or oracles in Ancient Greece.

<sup>41</sup> **Antiochus Epiphanes** (c. 215-164 BC) – Greek Hellenistic king who ruled the Seleucid Empire from 175 BC until his death.

<sup>42</sup> **Maccabees** – group of Jewish rebel warriors who took control of Judea.

<sup>43</sup> **Diocletian** (242-311) – Roman emperor from 284 until his abdication in 305.

thirty years before Christ it was paraphrased into Chaldee. At this day, both Old and New Testaments are extant, not only in their original languages, but in most other tongues and languages that are spoken upon the face of the earth, which no other book can pretend to. So that all endeavors that have from the very first been bent against it have been vanquished. Remarkable judgments and vengeance have been shown on the most violent oppressors of it.

Further, those to whom the Scriptures were outwardly committed, as the Jews first, and the anti-Christian church of apostatized Rome afterwards, fell into opinions and practices absolutely inconsistent with it. Also, they built all their present and future interests on those opinions and practices. Yet none of them could ever obliterate one line, not even of those places which most oppose their obstinate errors and defections. To plead for their [inventions], they both are forced to pretend additional traditions. The Mishna, Talmud, and Cubala<sup>44</sup> of the Jews, and the oral traditions of the Roman Catholics, all proceed from a wicked pretense that the Scriptures, though divine truths and the Word of God, yet do not contain all God's will, but that there are these other unwritten verities handed down, one says from Moses, and the other says from St. Peter, by word of mouth.

Since therefore the Bible has so wonderfully surmounted all difficulties and oppositions, for so many generations, and in so many dangers, and against so many endeavors to root it out of the world, we may (according to this maxim in philosophy: the creating and preserving cause of a particular thing is one and the same) conclude that the Author of it is the same God Who has preserved it by His special providence, and faithfully promised, and cannot lie, that heaven and earth shall pass away but one iota or tittle of His Word shall not pass away.

## 10. Triumph over All Opposition

The Scriptures have not only survived, but triumphed, over all the oppositions of the devil and the world. The gospel's success even in its infancy, its mighty and marvelous prevailing wherever it came, in spite of the many great disadvantages it encountered, are a strong and

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<sup>44</sup> **Mishna** – first major written collection of the Jewish oral traditions known as the Oral Torah.

**Talmud** – central text of Rabbinic Judaism and the primary source of Jewish religious law.

**Cubala** – possibly refers to the Kabbalah, an esoteric method, discipline, and school of thought in Jewish mysticism.

irresistible argument that it was from heaven. The Bible's doctrine directly opposed the whole corrupt interest of human nature and the wisdom and will of man (1Co 1:21; Ro 8:7). It was carried on and published by only a few outwardly weak, ignorant, and simple persons, illiterate fishermen, tent-makers, etc., without any force of arms, or earthly support. [It was carried on] against both wind and tide, the cruelties of raging powers, and arrogant opposition of human wisdom. It was a doctrine which the whole world, Jews and Gentiles, perfectly agreed to oppose—those hating it as a stumbling block, and these counting it foolishness. That such an improbable and unpleasing, such a friendless, unwelcome, slighted, opposed doctrine, by such instruments, and under such circumstances, should make its way in the world and subject so many nations to the obedience of the cross and make those who today persecuted it tomorrow ready to lay down their lives in defense and justification of it, evidently shows it to be owned by Omnipotence and not to be of human extract.

## **11. Power over the Hearts of Men**

But besides these outward and more visible trophies of the sacred Scriptures, how marvelous is their spiritual empire, efficacy, and power upon the hearts and consciences of men! It is this that converts the soul, enlightens the eye (Psa 19:7), discovers sin (Rom 7:7), convinces gainsayers (2Ti 3:16), killeth and terrifieth (2Co 3:6), rejoiceth the heart (Psa 19:8; 119:103), quickeneth (Psa 119:50), comforteth (Rom 15:4), manifesteth the thoughts, overthrows false religions, casteth down strongholds, and subverts the whole kingdom of Satan (2Co 10:4). What comforts sometimes, and what terrors at others, do proceed from the sacred Book. How are the poor souls of men mightily refreshed by it! Their weak hearts wonderfully strengthened! Their dead spirits raised and made to live again! Those that sat in darkness and the shadow of death are enlightened. Many that were in chains and fetters of fears and terrors of soul are delivered and set at liberty. Is it reasonable to conceive that a tree that bears such wonderful fruit was planted by any other hand than that of God? Who can speak words that shall restrain and repel all powers of darkness, when falling in to make havoc and desolation in the souls of men? That shall be able to give laws to the terrors of death, nay, eternal death, when they have taken hold of the consciences of sinners? Are not all these wonders performed by the holy Scriptures? And do they not often, on the other side, breathe thunder and lightnings, throw down the mighty from their seats, and destroy the thrones of the proud and

confident? Do they not turn the security of many into trembling and horror, and make their consciences to burn as if the fire of hell had already taken hold of them? These things are evident from the experience of thousands that have felt and undergone such powerful effects of the Word. Nay, I verily believe there are few that have read the Scriptures with attention and seriousness but can more or less witness the same. And where do such mighty operations come from? Has not the Almighty Author endued the Scriptures with such virtue through the Spirit, whereby they become the power of God unto salvation.

## 12. Testimony of the Church and Holy Martyrs

Add to all these arguments the testimony of the church and her holy martyrs who have sealed this truth with their blood. By the church we do not mean the Pope, whom the Roman Catholics call the church virtual, nor his cardinals and bishops met in general council, whom they call the church representative. We mean the whole company of believers in all ages who have professed the true faith. The penmen of the Scriptures, good, pious, honest, holy men, delivered it out as the Word of the Lord, and ever since there have been thousands, and hundreds of thousands, that have believed and testified the same down from age to age in a continual, uninterrupted succession. The church of the Jews, to whom were committed the oracles of God (Rom 8:3), professed the doctrine and received the books of the Old Testament and testified of them that they were divine. [Even] in great misery they have constantly confessed the same, when by simply denying it, they might have been partakers both of liberty and rule. And it is remarkable that even though the high priests and others of that nation persecuted the prophets while they lived, yet they received their writings as prophetic and divine. It is also remarkable that since the spirit of blindness and obstinacy is come upon Israel, despite their great hatred to the Christian religion, the holy Scripture of the Old Testament is kept pure and uncorrupt amongst them, even in those places which do plainly confirm the truth of the Christian religion (as Isaiah 53:3). And as for the Christian church, it hath with great constancy and sweet consent received and acknowledged the books of the Old and New Testament. The universal church that from the beginning until these times professed the Christian religion to be divine, did and doth also profess that these books are of God. And the various early churches which first received the books of the Old Testament and the gospels, the epistles written from the Apostles to them, their pastors, or some they knew, did receive them as the oracles of God, and delivered

them afterwards under the same title to their successors and other churches. And all the pastors and scholars, who had skill in the languages and matters, have tested and searched the Scriptures. All pious Christians, who by experience have felt their divine operation on their own souls have asserted the same. So that whoever rejects the Bible obliges himself to believe no other books in the world at all. None of them have comparably great and universal testimony. If he credits those books and rejects this one, it will show his plain, obstinate hypocrisy. And secondly, he who credits the Author of this book with the same credit wherewith he credits other authors, whom he supposes men of common honesty that would not knowingly write an untruth, cannot then refuse to receive this as a book divine and infallible, upon as good terms of credibility as he believes any human author in its kind to be true. [He believes human authors] because they themselves tell us that it is so. [So, he should believe the Bible because its penmen] affirm that God Himself inspired them to write it, and that it was no product of their own but every part of it the genuine dictate of the Holy Ghost.

And this argument is abundantly reinforced and strengthened from the consideration of that glorious company of martyrs, those innumerable multitudes, who in the flames and rage of persecution, have with the loss of their lives maintained the Scriptures to be the sacred Word of God, and had the same in such veneration that in the primitive ages the *traditors* (deliverers up of their Bibles to the heathen to be destroyed), were always esteemed as bad as professed apostates. Since therefore they did so constantly and with such hazards affirm this truth, what shadow of reason is there to suspect such a cloud of witnesses of folly, weakness, credulity, wickedness, or conspiracy among themselves, which such a diffused multitude was absolutely incapable of? Nor can we suppose that popular esteem on earth and vain glory could be the ground upon which they suffered, since they gave up their lives for a religion that utterly condemned such vanity and was everywhere in the world at that time odious and detestable, and whose profession brought nothing but outward shame and contempt.

### **13. Acknowledged by Its Enemies**

If the doctrines and matters of fact in the Scriptures are true, its divine original will be undeniable, and not only affirmed by its own friends, but significant parts of it will be acknowledged by its enemies. This is demonstrated by the following examples: The creation of the world is

intimated by Ovid<sup>45</sup> in his *Metamorphosis*, Book 1. The extraordinary long lives of the patriarchs in the first ages of the world [are affirmed] by Manetho the Egyptian,<sup>46</sup> Berosus the Chaldean,<sup>47</sup> and others. These add that they were appointed to live so long that they might study sciences and invent arts, especially that they might observe the celestial motions and enrich the world with the knowledge of astronomy. They say these patriarchs would have done little good if they had lived less than six hundred years because the great year, as they call it, is so long in going about and coming to a period. The Flood is mentioned by the same Berosus, whose words are recited by Josephus (*Antiquities*, Book 1, chapter 4). Of Noah, under the notion of two-faced Janus,<sup>48</sup> because he lived in both worlds, we read in Berosus and Herodotus;<sup>49</sup> and of the ark sailing over America, and the letting forth of birds that found no dry ground, in *Polyhistor*,<sup>50</sup> and others. Of the destruction of Sodom, or the asphaltic lake, we have some account in Pliny,<sup>51</sup> book 5, chapter 16, and Justin,<sup>52</sup> book 36. That there was such a man as Moses and a people as the Israelites; that this Moses was their captain and led them out of Egypt, wrote their story, and gave them laws, is testified by the most ancient records of the Egyptians, Phoenicians, Chaldeans, and Grecians. And Manetho speaks very particularly both of their coming into Egypt and departure thence. Of circumcision: Herodotus, Strabo,<sup>53</sup> Diodorus Siculus,<sup>54</sup> and Tacitus,<sup>55</sup> book 2.

Of the coming of the Israelites into Canaan, Procopius,<sup>56</sup> book 4. Of Solomon, we read in Dionysius Cassius;<sup>57</sup> of the slaughter of Sennacherib, in Herodotus, book 2. The great Roman Historian Tacitus speaks in his annals of the Christians being persecuted by Nero, on

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<sup>45</sup> **Ovid** (43-18 BC) – Roman poet who lived during the reign of Augustus.

<sup>46</sup> **Manetho** – Egyptian priest from Sebennytos, who lived in the Ptolemaic Kingdom in the early third century BC.

<sup>47</sup> **Berosus** – Hellenistic-era Babylonian writer, priest of Bel Marduk, and astronomer.

<sup>48</sup> **Janus** – the Roman god of beginnings, usually depicted as having two faces.

<sup>49</sup> **Herodotus** (c. 484-c. 425 BC) – Greek historian and geographer.

<sup>50</sup> **Polyhistor** – possibly refers to a book by Julius C. Solinus (3<sup>rd</sup> century).

<sup>51</sup> **Pliny** (AD 23-79) – Roman author, naturalist, and natural philosopher.

<sup>52</sup> **Justin** (c. second century) – Latin writer and historian who lived under the Roman Empire.

<sup>53</sup> **Strabo** (64 BC-c. 24 AD) – Greek geographer, philosopher, and historian.

<sup>54</sup> **Diodorus Siculus** (fl. 1<sup>st</sup> century BC) – ancient Greek historian.

<sup>55</sup> **Tacitus** (c. AD 56-c. 120) – Roman historian and politician.

<sup>56</sup> **Procopius** (c. 500-565) – prominent Greek scholar from Caesarea Maritima.

<sup>57</sup> **Dionysius Cassius** or Cassius Longinus (c. AD 213-273) – Greek rhetorician and philosophical critic.

pretense of burning of Rome, which he set on fire himself. He says expressly that the Author of that name or sect was Christ, who, when Tiberius was emperor, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, the then procurator of Judea. The star that appeared at our Savior's birth is taken notice of by Pliny, book 2, chapter 5. But more particularly by Calcidius,<sup>58</sup> a heathen philosopher, in his comment on Plato's *Timaeus*. His words, as I find them cited by Cardinal Baronius,<sup>59</sup> that learned annalist, are these: "There is another more venerable and holy history, which tells us of the rise of a certain unusual star, not threatening diseases and death but the descent of the venerable God, to converse with men and mortal affairs. When certain wise men of Chaldea saw this star in their journey by night, being sufficiently acquainted with astronomy and consideration of celestial things, they are reported to have sought out this new birth of God. Having found the majesty of this Child, they worshipped Him and offered gifts suitable to so great a God." Herod's slaughtering of the children is notorious by that joke passed upon him on that occasion by the emperor Augustus, recorded by Macrobius.<sup>60</sup> He heard that amongst those children under two years old whom Herod the king of the Jews had commanded to be slain in Syria, the said Herod's own son was slain also. He said, "It is better to be Herod's hog than his son." This alludes to the Jew's abhorrence of swine's flesh, which it seems Herod, though not of that nation, yet, pretending himself a kind of proselyte, did likewise observe. Touching the supernatural darkness of the sun at our Lord's crucifixion, it was with amazement seen and recorded by Dionysius the Areopagite.<sup>61</sup> And Tertullian, in his *Apology*, chapter 21, appeals to the Roman records for the certainty of it. And Origen affirms that one Phlegon, secretary to the emperor Adrian, did write thereof in his chronicles.

What a significant testimony is that extorted by truth from the mouth of an enemy, I mean Josephus. He was a Jew in religion as well as by nation, though he wrote in Greek, born not more than five or six years after Christ's passion. In his 18th book, and 4<sup>th</sup> chapter, speaking of the reign of Tiberius, he hath these words: "In those days there was one Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a worker of great

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<sup>58</sup> **Calcidius** (4<sup>th</sup> century) – philosopher who translated and commented on the first part of Plato's *Timaeus*.

<sup>59</sup> **Cardinal Baronius** (1538-1607) – Italian cardinal and historian of the Catholic Church.

<sup>60</sup> **Macrobius** (fl. C. AD 400) – Roman provincial.

<sup>61</sup> **Dionysius the Areopagite** (1<sup>st</sup> century) – Athenian judge at the Areopagus Court in Athens.

miracles, and a teacher of such as readily receive the truth, and had many followers, as well Jews as Gentiles. This is that Christ, who, though he was accused by the chief of our nation, and by Pilate condemned to be crucified; yet did not they who had first loved him forsake him; for he appeared unto them the third day alive again, the holy prophets foretelling these and many other wonderful things of him. And even to this day the Christian sect, so named from him, continues.” Nor is it less clear of Lentulus,<sup>62</sup> in his epistle to the emperor Tiberius, recited by Eutropius, in his annals of the Roman Senators, and now commonly extant in the *Bibliotheca Patrum*.<sup>63</sup> He thus begins, “There hath appeared in our days, and yet is living, a man of great virtue or power, named Jesus Christ, Who is called of the nations, the prophet of truth, Whom His disciples call the Son of God, a raiser of the dead, and an healer of all manner of diseases.”

To all which we might add the prophecies of the Sybils, among the heathens, who most plainly foretold the coming of Christ, the Son of God, into the world, and expressed His very name and quality in certain acrostic verses, recited by the great Augustine,<sup>64</sup> in the 23<sup>rd</sup> chapter of the ninth book of *The City of God*.

## 14. A General Sense of Religion

He that disowns the Bible to be of divine authority must either think there is some revelation from God to the world, how He will be worshipped, and how they ought to conduct themselves, or he thinks there is none. If he thinks there is none, he not only gives the lie to the Christian and Jewish, but generally to all religion that has been or is in the world; for they all have pretended and do allege the same as their foundation. And besides, he must confess that God (Who has made man the noblest of creatures and lord of the whole world) has left him in a worse condition, in the present posture we find him, than the meanest creatures, to whom He has given sufficient means to attain the highest end of their beings. But that infinite wisdom should deal thus is absurd

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<sup>62</sup> **Lentulus** – author of an epistle of mysterious origin that was first widely published in Italy in the fifteenth century; purports to be written by a Roman official, contemporary of Jesus, and gives a physical and personal description of Jesus.

<sup>63</sup> *Bibliotheca Patrum* – a collection of the works of the early ecclesiastical writers.

<sup>64</sup> **Augustine** (354-430) – theologian and philosopher and bishop of Hippo Regius in North Africa.

and unreasonable to conceive. If he grant there is anywhere a revelation from God to the world, let it be produced, and judge if it be any way able to vie with the Scriptures for all those glorious characters and marks of divine authority, power, and excellency that we have enumerated.

## 15. Not from Men or Devils

If the Scriptures be neither the invention of devils nor men, then it can be from none but God. And they are not from devils; for neither could they work miracles,<sup>65</sup> nor deliver true prophecies to confirm them. Nor would it consist with God's sovereignty over them, or with His goodness, wisdom, or faithfulness of governing the world. Nor would Satan speak so much for God, nor lay such a design for man's salvation, and against His own kingdom, nor be so industrious to draw the world to unbelief of it.

Nor are the Scriptures the invention of men, for men must be either good or bad. [The authors] could not be good men [if the Scriptures are not truly from God], for nothing could be more opposite to goodness, nay, even common honesty, than to claim the name of God falsely, feign miracles, and cheat people with promises of another world. And then on the other side, it is as impossible evil men could be the inventors of such a holy book. Can any rational man think that wicked deceivers would so highly advance the glory of God? Would they so humiliate themselves and mark their own practices as evil? Could such an admirable undeniable spirit of holiness, righteousness, and self-denial, as runs through every vein of Scripture, proceed from the invention of the wicked? Would they ever have extolled their enemies, the godly, and framed such perfect spiritual laws? Or laid such a plan to fight against the flesh and all their worldly happiness, as everywhere the scope of the Scripture doth carry on? If we cannot gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles, then may we be assured that no ill men had a hand in writing and promoting this good and holy book.

## 16. The Rage of Satan against It

The divine composition of this blessed book is not a little manifested by the continual rage of the devil against it. This appears in his stirring up

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<sup>65</sup> Scripture does reveal that Satan and his demons can work miraculous signs and wonders (Exo 7:11, 22; 2Th 2:9), so it would seem more appropriate to state that Satan cannot do *such* miracles as we read of Christ and His servants doing in confirmation of the Word of God.—*Editor*

his instruments to utterly suppress it. What book in the world ever met with such opposition, as I already said? Also in those temptations with which he assaults the hearts of men, when they apply themselves to study it seriously. We can read any other history and readily consider its claims to be believable; but as soon as we come to the Bible, strange objections, doubts, and curiosities arise, and presently we are apt to question the truth and possibility of every passage. These are the suggestions of Satan, to render that holy book ineffectual to us, as he knows its target and intention is to overthrow his kingdom of darkness.

## 17. Objections Addressed

Some of the most frequent objections against the Bible are these that follow:

*Objection 1.* How could men know, in the ages when the various parts of the Bible were written, that they were written by an infallible Spirit, and so distinguish them from other writings?

*Answer.* Two ways. First, by the quality of the persons; and secondly, from the nature and quality of the matter. As for Moses, there could not be the least cause of doubting his being inspired by God, since he wrought such miracles, and had a visible and audible intercourse with the Lord, as we read that the Lord said unto him, “Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever” (Exo 19:9). The other parts of the Old Testament were written by prophets and holy men. And though several of them were not received and hearkened to as such by the corrupt rulers of the Jews in their lifetimes; yet they were acknowledged afterwards because of the holiness of their lives as well as the fulfilling of the things mentioned. The judgments which they foretold came to pass, and the message they delivered was agreeable to the established worship of God. God Himself had provided two ways for discovering all pretenses to revelation. First, if any such pretender went about to seduce the people to idolatry, he was to be rejected: “The prophet that shall speak in the name of other gods shall die” (see Deu 18:20). Secondly, if the matter came not to pass: “when a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously” (Deu 18:22). God was pleased to direct a final decision to be made concerning what was to be received for the Old Testament after the Babylonian captivity in the days of Ezra. Several of the last prophets were personally present at that famous

synagogue,<sup>66</sup> where by a divine direction all the parts of the Old Testament were collected. A separation was made between the works of true prophets and false. Writings that came by divine inspiration were separated from those that were of divine extraction. Such as were to be a perpetual rule to the church were distinguished from such as were not, relating only to particular cases. And in this settlement the Jewish church did acquiesce, and from that time to this have had no further disputes. They received those same books and no others. Those called Apocrypha, which the Roman Catholics would thrust upon us, were never received as canonical<sup>67</sup> by the Jews.

For the books of the New Testament, they were all written either by apostles or apostolical men, known by their being called to that office, and the gift of tongues, and power of working miracles, to be guided by the Holy Ghost.

The writing of the Old Testament ended with the prophets, for, after Malachi, to the time of John the Baptist, which was nearly four hundred years, there arose not a prophet in Israel. The New Testament likewise begins with the accomplishment of Malachi's prophecy, by the birth of the said John, predicted under the type of Elias, and ends with the apostles. John, who wrote the Revelation, outlived all the rest of the apostles till the time of Trajan, in the 99th year of our Lord, and almost thirty years after the destruction of Jerusalem, and he closes the canon of the New Testament with a denunciation of a curse to any that should add thereunto (Rev 22:18).

*Objection 2.* But how are we sure that we have now at this day all the books that were considered canonical in ancient times? It seems we do not have them all. There is mention made of Solomon's three thousand parables or proverbs, and songs a thousand and five (1Ki 4:32); of Nathan the prophet and of Gad the seer (1Ch 29:29); the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite; and the visions of Iddo the seer (2Ch 9). And in the New Testament we hear of the epistle to the Laodiceans (Col 4:16). Now where are any of these today?

*Answer:* Those books mentioned in the Old Testament were either books of a common nature, and not divinely inspired, or else they are yet

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<sup>66</sup> **famous synagogue** – the “Great Synagogue”; Jewish tradition reports that a group of leaders joined Ezra after the return from Babylon to restore worship and order to Jewish life. This Great Synagogue may be reflected in Nehemiah 9 and 10. Prophets such as Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi may have been present.

<sup>67</sup> **canonical** – recognized by God's people to be inspired Scripture.

extant under another name. As far as we know, the books called “Samuel” might be written partly by himself while he lived, and partly by Gad and Nathan after his death. And for the other writings of Nathan, Ahijah, and Iddo, they may very probably be the same that we call the Books of the Kings. And for that epistle to the Laodiceans the original is, *ek Laodikeias*, “from” not “to” as some translations would have it. And it is probable it was some letter written from the Laodiceans to Paul, wherein there might be something that concerned the Colossians, and therefore the apostle advised them to read it.

*Objection 3.* But the Roman Catholics say that the very fountains, the Hebrew and Greek originals, are corrupted, depraved, and troubled; and if so, how can we be certain at all?

*Answer:* It is true that they do say so, but most falsely and wickedly, only to the dishonor of the Word of God, to make way for their own traditions and the authority of their church. By this suggestion they blaspheme the providence of God and also lay an insufferable scandal on the church. For if the Scriptures were committed to her charge, and she hath suffered any part of them to be either lost or corrupted, has she not grossly abused her trust? But they are not able to give one instance where any such corruption has happened. As for the Old Testament, it is well enough known how strictly careful the Jews were and are to preserve it to this day. They went so far as to count how often every letter in the alphabet was used in every book of the Old Testament. And Philo the Jew, an ancient, learned, and approved author of that nation, affirms that from the giving of the law to his time, which was more than two thousand years, there was not so much as one word changed or varied; yea, that there was not any Jew but would rather die a thousand times over than suffer their law to be changed in the least. And Arius Montanus,<sup>68</sup> a person extremely skilled in the Hebrew, in his preface to the interlinear Bible, assures us that, as in these Hebrew Bibles which are without vowels we find a certain constant agreement of all the manuscripts and prints, and a like writing in each, so in all those too that have the points added we have not observed the least variation or difference of pointing; nor is there any man can affirm that he ever in any place saw different exemplars of the Hebrew text. And indeed, had the Jews ever corrupted any part of it, no doubt they would have done it in those texts that plainly refer to our Savior; and had any Christians done it, the Jews would soon have discovered the forgery. But neither of these things have happened; therefore, to say the same is any way corrupted is false.

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<sup>68</sup> **Benito Arias Montano** (1527-1598) – Spanish orientalist and polymath.

For the New Testament, it is true there have been observed in ancient manuscripts some variant readings, but not such as cause any dispute about the sum or substance of the doctrine, nor as significantly change the sense of the text.

*Objection 4.* But suppose the originals be pure, how shall the unlearned, who are the far greater part of mankind, be sure that the translations they have, and can only make use of, are well and honestly done and do contain the Word of God?

*Answer:* The Word of God is the doctrine and revelation of God's will, the sense and meaning, not barely or strictly the words, letters, and syllables. This is contained exactly and most purely in the originals, and in all translations so far as they agree therewith. Now, some translations may be more appropriate, or render the sense of the originals better. But in general the translations—even the most imperfect that we know of—express so much of the mind, will, and counsel of God as is sufficient, by the blessing of God upon a conscientious reading of them, to acquaint a man with the mysteries of salvation, to work in him a true faith, and to bring him to live godly, righteously, and soberly in this present world, and to salvation in the next. The translators generally, as they have been men of learning, so likewise have they been honest, and for the most part godly men. Therefore, they would not, for their own honor's sake, and much more for conscience's sake, abuse the world with any willful false versions, to lead souls into error, in a matter of that importance. Or, if some should have been so wicked, others as learned and of better principles would soon have discovered the deception. Now, if we consider how many men of different persuasions have translated the Bible and harmoniously agree in all significant things, is it possible to imagine they should all combine, so impertinently as well as wickedly, to deceive mankind? Anyone who has bestowed even a few years in the study of the languages would immediately detect it.

*Objection 5.* How can we think the whole Bible to be of divine inspiration when some parts of it contradict others? The divine Spirit cannot be contrary to itself. Yet is there anything more opposite than the two evangelists in reckoning up our Savior's genealogy? St. Matthew says, "Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary" (Mat 1:16); and St. Luke says, "Joseph...the son of Eli" (Luk 3:23).

*Answer:* Contradictions in Scripture are really no more than *seeming* contradictions. They are actually an argument that in the writing of this book there was no corrupt design or conspiracy to engage the opinions of men. Upon careful study, there will appear in them a deep and

unthought-of agreement, a unanimous tendency toward the great end of the whole. It is our thoughtlessness, or shallow apprehension, that makes us think the Scripture is at variance with itself. In the two texts cited, a natural father is one thing, a legal father another. You must know that Joseph and Mary were both of the same ancestry and [extended] family. He descended from David by Solomon, she by Nathan. In the posterity of Zerubbabel they were divided into two several families, whereof one was the royal race, and that lineage Joseph was of, which Matthew follows. Luke follows the other family, of which Mary descended, whom Joseph marries, and by that means is called the son of her father Eli. So that here is no contradiction, but on the contrary, an excellent discovery of our Savior's line drawn down on both sides, whereby it appears, that as he was Joseph's reputed Son, so he had a title to be King of the Jews. And as he was born of Mary, so likewise on her side he descended from David, as was promised of the Messiah. But for reconciling all such seeming contradictions, see Mr. Streat's book, entitled, *The Dividing of the Hoof*, a very useful piece, and worthy of perusal.

I have only one more argument to add from a very learned author, and then I shall conclude with the testimony of the reverend and learned Mr. John Calvin.

## 18. The Internal Testimony of the Spirit

And now it may not be amiss to add one thing more, which I could not pass by. External arguments and motives powerfully demonstrate the divine authority of the holy Scripture, but it is absolutely necessary to the stability and assurance of our faith, in order to eternal life, to have the *internal testimony* and *effectual working* of the Holy Spirit upon our hearts.

If He works in and upon our hearts only by the common communication of spiritual light into our minds, enabling us to discern the evidences that are in the Scripture of its own divine original, we should be often shaken in our assent and moved from our stability. Great darkness and blindness remain upon the minds of men, and everything they believe has some sort of obscurity attending it. In addition, Satan tempts us in many different ways; he strives to disturb our peace, weaken our faith, and cause doubts. Therefore, happy are those who experience the powerful establishment and assurance of the Holy Ghost, Who gives them a spiritual sense of the power and reality of those things believed, whereby their faith is greatly confirmed. This is what brings us to the "riches of the full assurance of understanding" (Col 2:2; 1Th 1:5).

It is because of this spiritual experience that our perception of spiritual things is so often expressed by acts of sense—tasting, seeing, feeling. Our senses are the greatest evidence [to us] of the properties of natural things.

It is the Holy Spirit that assists, helps, and relieves us against temptations that may arise in us, so that they shall not prevail. Indeed, without this, our first prime assent to the divine authority of the Scriptures will not secure us. The influence and assistance of the Spirit in the midst of dangers so strengthens the sincere Christian that it makes him stand as firm as a rock. [He will then stand even though] he might not have the skill to defend the truth by arguments against subtle and sophisticated deceivers, who always try to raise up objections against it. They might claim its obscurity, imperfection, lack of order, difficulties, and seeming contradictions.

There are also other special, gracious actings of the Holy Ghost on the minds of believers that are a part of this internal testimony whereby their faith is established: His anointing and sealing them, His witnessing with them, and His being an earnest in them. Now, no internal work of the Spirit can be the object<sup>69</sup> of our faith—what faith rests upon; yet without it we can never sincerely believe as we ought, nor be established in believing against the temptation of the devil and objections of evil men.

Dr. John Owen says,

“It hath been already declared that it is the *authority and veracity of God, revealing themselves in the Scripture and by it, that is the formal reason of our faith, or supernatural assent unto it, as it is the Word of God.*

“It remains only that we enquire, in the second place, into the way and means whereby they evidence themselves unto us, and the Scriptures thereby to be of God, so as that we may undoubtedly and infallibly believe them so to be. Now because faith, as we have showed, is an *assent upon testimony*; and consequently, divine faith is an assent upon divine testimony; there must be some testimony or witness in this case, whereon faith doth rest: and this, we say, is the testimony of the Holy Ghost, the Author of the Scriptures. And this work and testimony of the Spirit may be reduced into two heads...

“The *impressions or characters*, which are *subjectively* left in the Scripture and upon it by the Holy Ghost its Author, of all the divine excellencies or properties of the divine nature, are the first means

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<sup>69</sup> **object** – “formal reason” in the original.

evidencing that testimony of the Spirit which our faith rests upon, or they give the *first evidence* of its divine original and authority, whereon we do believe it. The way whereby we learn the eternal power and deity of God from the works of creation is no otherwise but by those marks, tokens, and impressions of His divine power, wisdom, and goodness that are upon them; for from the consideration of their subsistence, greatness, order, and use, reason doth necessarily conclude an infinite subsisting Being, of Whose power and wisdom these things are the manifest effects. These are clearly seen and understood by the things that are made. We need no other arguments to prove that God made the world but itself...(Psa 104)...Now there are greater and more evident impressions of divine excellencies left on the written Word, from the infinite wisdom of the Author of it, than any that are communicated unto the works of God...Hence David, comparing the works and the Word of God, as to their instructive efficacy...doth prefer the Word incomparably before them (Psa 19:1-3, 7-9). And these do manifest the Word unto our faith to be His more clearly than the other do the works to be His unto our reason...God, as the immediate Author of the Scripture, hath left in the very Word itself evident tokens and impressions of His wisdom, prescience,<sup>70</sup> omniscience, power, goodness, holiness, truth, and other divine, infinite excellencies, sufficiently evidenced unto the enlightened minds of believers.”<sup>71</sup>

This is the basis of why we believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God—with a supernatural faith from God. And this evidence is clear to the common and unlearned as much as to the wisest philosophers. The truth is, if rational arguments and external motives were the only foundation of receiving the Scripture to be the Word God, learned men and philosophers would always have been the most ready to admit it and the strongest in adhering to it. External arguments do prevail on the minds of men so far as they are able to accurately judge them and discern their force. But it is quite apparent that the opposite is the case: “Ye see your calling, brethren...not many wise men after the flesh,” etc. (1Co 1:26).

Secondly, the Spirit of God gives evidence of the divine original and authority of the Scripture by the power and authority that He puts forth in it and by it over the minds and consciences of men. The apostle

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<sup>70</sup> **prescience** – foreknowledge.

<sup>71</sup> John Owen, *The Reason of Faith in The Works of John Owen*, vol. 4, ed. William Goold (Edinburgh: Johnstone & Hunter, 1850-1853; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1967), 91-92.

specifically affirms this to be the reason and cause of faith: “And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest” (1Co 14:24-25). It was not the force of external arguments. It was not the testimony of this or that church. It was not the use of miracles that brought the effect (vv. 23-24). The only evidence on which they received the Word and acknowledged it to be from God was the power and effect [God worked] in them. “He is convinced of all...and thus the secrets of his heart are made manifest” (1Co 14:24-25). He cannot deny that God is effectively working in it or with it. In the same way, the woman of Samaria was convinced of the truth of Christ’s words and believed in him, all because He told her all things that ever she did (Joh 4:29). The Word of God is, as all sincere souls find, quick and powerful, so that “he that believeth...hath the witness in himself” (1Jo 5:10). “Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (Joh 7:16-17).<sup>72</sup>

In a word, “let it be granted, that all who are really converted unto God by the power of the Word have that infallible evidence and testimony of its divine original, authority, and power in their own souls and consciences, that they thereon believe it with faith divine and supernatural, in conjunction with the other evidences before mentioned, as parts of the same divine testimony, and it is all I aim at herein.”<sup>73</sup>

This testimony, though it is not common to everyone, nor can it convince another, yet it is very strong to those who experience its virtue and efficacy. I conclude this last argument by urging all [my readers] to labor after a taste of its divine, powerful, and soul-changing operations, and then they will need no further arguments to prove it is from God.

We shall therefore conclude this brief discourse on this subject with those excellent words of a learned man upon the same occasion:

“Let it be considered, then, as an undeniable truth, that they who have been inwardly taught by the Spirit, feel an entire acquiescence in the Scripture, and that it is self-authenticated, carrying with it its own evidence, and ought not to be made the subject of demonstration and arguments from reason; but it obtains the credit which it deserves with us by the testimony of the Spirit. For though it conciliate our reverence by its internal majesty, it never seriously affects us till it is confirmed by the Spirit in our hearts. Therefore, being illuminated by him, we now believe the divine original of the Scripture, not from our own judgment

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<sup>72</sup> Adapted from Owen, 93.

<sup>73</sup> Owen, 95.

or that of others, but we esteem the certainty, that we have received it from God's own mouth by the ministry of men, to be superior to that of any human judgment, and equal to that of an intuitive perception of God himself in it. We seek not arguments or probabilities to support our judgment, but submit our judgments and understandings as to a thing concerning which it is impossible for us to judge; and that not like some persons, who are in the habit of hastily embracing what they do not understand, which displeases them as soon as they examine it, but because we feel the firmest conviction that we hold an invincible truth; nor like those unhappy men who surrender their minds captives to superstitions, but because we perceive in it the undoubted energies of the Divine power, by which we are attracted and inflamed to an understanding and voluntary obedience, but with a vigour and efficacy superior to the power of any human will or knowledge...It is such a persuasion, therefore, as requires no reasons; such a knowledge as is supported by the highest reason, in which, indeed, the mind rests with greater security and constancy than in any reasons; it is, finally, such a sentiment as cannot be produced but by a revelation from heaven. I speak of nothing but what every believer experiences in his heart, except that my language falls far short of a just explication of the subject."<sup>74</sup>



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<sup>74</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, tr. John Allen (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1909), 79-80.