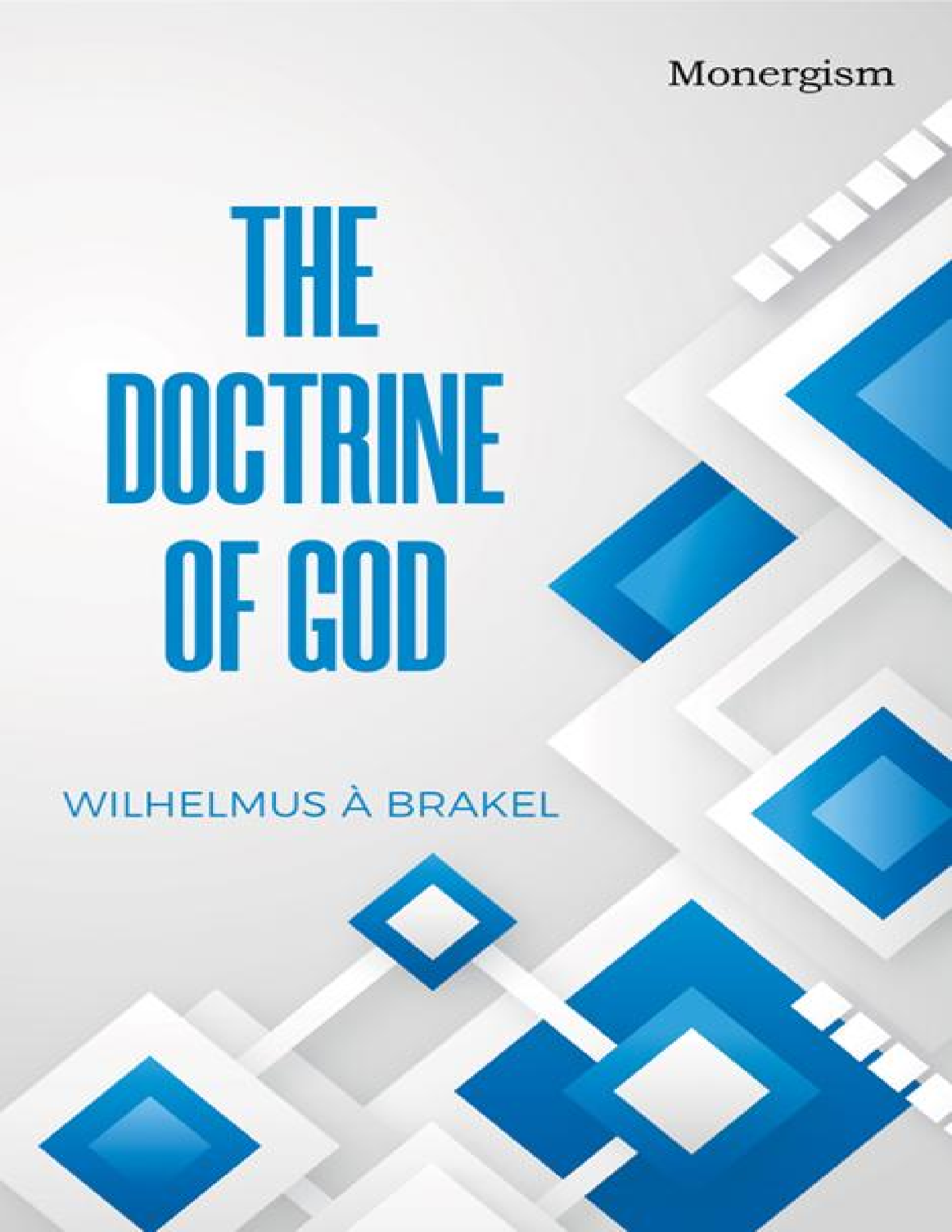


Monergism

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

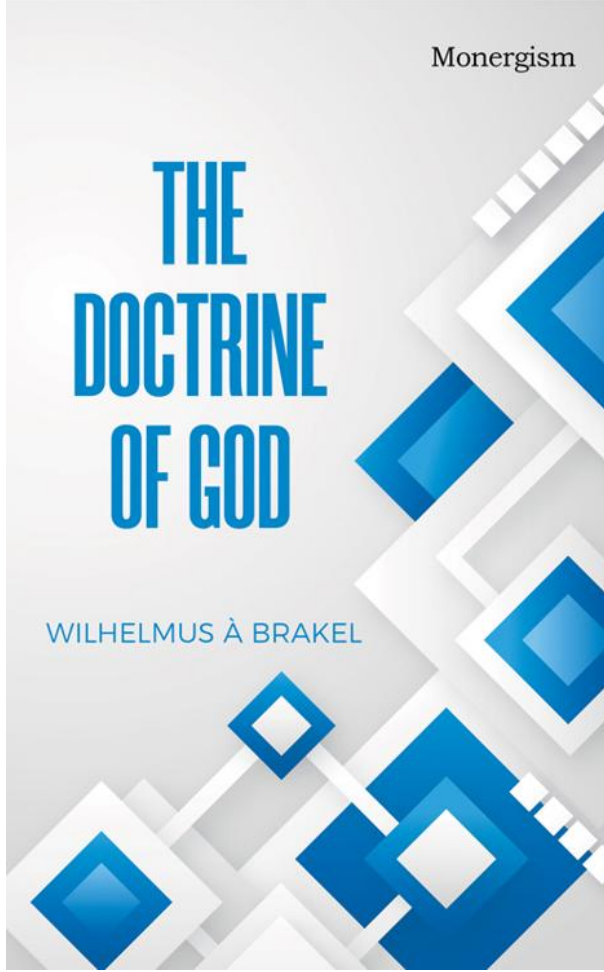
WILHELMUS À BRAKEL



Monergism

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

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The Doctrine of God

by

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Table of Contents

[Preface. TO THE CHURCH OF GOD IN THE NETHERLANDS.](#)

[Chapter 1. On the Knowledge of God from Nature](#)

[Chapter 2. On the Word of God](#)

[Chapter 3. On God](#)

[Chapter 4. Of the Divine Persons](#)

[Chapter 5. On God's Decrees in General](#)

[Chapter 6. On the Eternal Predestination of Election and Reprobation](#)

[Chapter 7. On the Covenant of Redemption between God the Father and God the Son for the Elect; or the Counsel of Peace](#)

[Chapter 8. On the Creation of the World](#)

[Chapter 9. On Angels and Devils](#)

[Chapter 10. On God's Providence](#)

TO THE CHURCH OF GOD IN THE NETHERLANDS

Beloved brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ, Grace and peace be multiplied to you from God our Father!

God wills that man not be idle. He has assigned to him a delightful task before the fall and a challenging one after the fall. He desires that everyone be faithful in the calling to which He has appointed them. Some callings have a physical object, others a spiritual one. Whether the object is physical or not, it neither takes away nor contributes to the spirituality of God's service in the execution of the calling. Instead, it is the individual's condition and the manner in which they engage in it. A natural person even handles spiritual matters in a natural and displeasing manner to God. But a spiritual person approaches even physical matters spiritually. They recognize it as something ordained by the Lord, embrace God's will in it, execute it in willing obedience as a service to their God, and with the aim of glorifying Him.

Among all the ministries, there is none as holy, excellent, necessary, and useful as the pastoral and teaching office in the church. The one whom God calls, qualifies, and makes faithful to be a minister of the New Testament is a marvel in the world, an instrument in the hand of God to save lost souls, gather the church of God, edify it, and set it apart for God's praise on earth. A wicked preacher is the most terrible and harmful creature that the world bears. They are a stain on the church, a stumbling block over which many fall into eternal damnation, and a cause of the damnation of many souls.

A faithful servant of Christ is an ornament in the house of his God, a light on the candlestick, a city on a hill, a guide to the blind, a terror

to the wicked, a joy to the godly, a comforter to the afflicted, a counselor to the perplexed, a leader for the believers to heaven. He lives for only a short time, he preaches to only a few; enlightening others, he consumes himself. The loss of a gifted teacher is invaluable.

The brevity of a teacher's lifetime, the small circle of listeners, God in our day marvelously fills by making people known through the art of printing. This, which is noteworthy, occurred at the time when the church was to come out of Babylon. Thus, it was perfected only when the Reformation broke out in the early sixteenth century. Now a single teacher can preach to an entire nation, indeed, even to the whole world, for centuries after his death. With joyful willingness, I seize this opportunity to preach even long after my death, and that to the entire Netherlands, and according to the ability that the Lord has granted me, be it as it may.

When the art of printing had not yet been invented, one had to entrust their work to a particular person, hence the origin of dedications. But now, they are not necessary. They are also sometimes offensive. Sometimes the work is too insignificant for the high-ranking individuals to whom it is dedicated. And they are always susceptible to misinterpretations of the dedicators' motives. Therefore, I omit them and address you, the Church of God in the Netherlands, and dedicate this work to you!

Especially, dedicate this book to the congregation that presently benefits from my ministry, the congregation in which I have previously served as an overseer, and the congregation that twice called me but could not obtain me due to the circumstances of the congregation where I was at that time.

Receive it with affection. Read it diligently and attentively. Form small groups among acquaintances, read a chapter or section together, and let what you read provide material for edifying discussions. I will say nothing about the content of this book; you can read it for yourselves. Just know that everything from my previous works, such as "Hallelujah," "Scruples of a Communicant," and "The Doctrine and Guidance of the Labadists," that is relevant, has been included in this one since it is mine. If this work of mine can be of any guidance to students, candidates, and young ministers in understanding the Divine truths in their own nature, protecting them, practicing them in deed, and presenting them to the congregation for the conversion and strengthening of souls, and for the building up of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, it will bring me joy.

May the almighty and benevolent God, who has impelled me to this work and repeatedly rekindled it when I thought of abandoning it, and from whom the good found herein has come, pour out His Holy Spirit upon all who will read and hear this book. May it bring conversion to the unconverted, instruction to the less knowledgeable, correction to the erring, encouragement to the despondent, stimulation to the sluggish, consolation to the mournful, and growth in faith, hope, and love to all who have received a principle of grace!

May the Lord protect His church in the Netherlands and cause it to grow in number and godliness. May He bless the Netherlands for the sake of the church! May He dwell and walk in your midst, enlighten you with His light, fill you with all grace, and guide you with His counsel. And when you have finished your course, may He take you up into eternal glory!

I remain your fellow brother and servant in Christ, to whom be praise, honor, and glory forever.

Rotterdam, February 26, 1700.

Of the second edition, I have stated that nothing has been omitted, but here and there, the meaning has been slightly shortened. Nothing significant has been added, only an opinion has been added here and there, or a matter has been expanded somewhat. This edition was published on October 2, 1701.

The third edition has been significantly expanded.

1. **With the life of faith on the Promises.
2. With a cautionary guidance against the Pietists, Quietists, and similar strayers towards a natural and spiritless religion under the guise of spirituality.
3. With an explanatory and applicative expansion of the Lord's Prayer.**

If anyone is overtaken by a dissatisfied thought because the third edition has been enlarged, let them turn their dissatisfaction into generosity and give their first or second edition to someone of lesser means, so that they may also be edified by it and obtain this edition for themselves.

May the Lord bless this edition as well, that it may serve as a defense of truth and true godliness, both of which are under attack in these times, on one side by people with corrupted understanding who make reason the rule of doctrine and life, and on the other side by

people who, being focused on holiness and love, set aside the truth and stray into a natural religion and virtuousness.

The Lord will preserve His church so that the devil, with all his followers, will not overcome it.

I remain a servant to everyone in Christ.

W. á BRAKEL.

Chapter 1

On the Knowledge of God from Nature

This book bears the name of The Christian's Reasonable Service, taken from Romans 12:1 - "Which is your reasonable service." Four aspects are encompassed by religion:

1. The foundation or basis,
2. The form or essence,
3. A rule, or regulative principle,
4. The actual execution.

First, the foundation of religion is God's nature. The works of omnipotence or benevolence are indeed motives to urge humans to serve God, but they are not the foundation; that is, God's nature itself. In Himself, God possesses all glory and worthiness of service, even if there were no creatures. No creature can exist without Him, for it is from Him and through Him; and as there is a creature, God's majesty binds that creature, which is His own creation and exists by His influence, to be for Him and for His service. If it is a rational creature, God obliges, by virtue of being God, that rational creature placed in a direct line under its Maker to honor and serve God, and to be entirely for God in all that it is. God's nature imposes this eternal bond on the creature, and likewise on man. Jeremiah 10:7 - "Who would not fear You, O King of the nations? For this is Your rightful due." Psalm 119:90-91 - "Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides. By Your appointment they stand this day, for all things are Your servants."

Second, the form or nature of religion consists of a person's knowledge, acknowledgment, and heartfelt approval of that bond and obligation to be entirely for God in everything they are and can be, at all times, because He is God, it is His due by His nature, and He is worthy of it. In this, the individual willingly dedicates and offers themselves to God's service, because He is God, it is fitting, and it leads to their salvation. Psalm 116:16 - "O LORD, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, the son of Your maidservant; You have loosed my bonds." Isaiah 44:5 - "One will say, 'I am the LORD's'; another will call himself by the name of Jacob; another will write with his hand, 'The LORD's,' and name himself by the name of Israel."

Third, the rule or regulative principle. Religion includes the revelation of God's will as a rule by which a person, as a servant, must act. It is not left to man to choose how he will serve God, for that would place him above God. If someone begins to do so, they elevate themselves above God, and all their work displeases the Lord. Matthew 15:9 - "And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." The Lord Himself sets the rule for man and reveals to him what He requires and how He desires it to be done. Isaiah 8:19-20 - "And when they say to you, 'Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,' should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Romans 12:2 - "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Fourth, Actions. Religion encompasses a practical alignment with and execution of God's will. Whatever God wills, the servant of God

also wills because it is God's will. It becomes the servant's delight and pleasure that God desires something concerning him, that God reveals to him what He wants to be done, and he rejoices in it, being ready to do it as the will of the Lord. Ephesians 6:6 - "Not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."

Now, as we address religion, we will speak not only of these four aspects but also in the prescribed order. First and foremost is the Foundation of religion, which is God, as God, and because He is God. If man is to establish God as the Foundation of his service and acknowledge that bond, then he must know God. Therefore, it is necessary that we first demonstrate from where the right knowledge of God should be derived.

II. God has determined within Himself what He will reveal about Himself and to what extent. This knowledge of God Himself is called *Theologia archetypa prototypa*, the expressive pattern. And the knowledge in rational creatures corresponding to this is called *Theologia ectypa*, the expression or the expressed image.

The manner in which this designated knowledge is impressed or given to creatures varies according to the diversity of rational creatures.

- Angels know God through the immediate contemplation of God's face. Matthew 18:10 - "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven."
- Such will also be the knowledge of the glorified elect. 2 Corinthians 5:7 - "For we walk by faith, not by sight." 1 Corinthians 13:12 - "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face."

- Christ, according to His human nature, knows God through His union with the Deity of the Son of God, and thus in a higher way than angels and humans can comprehend. Colossians 2:9 - "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." John 3:34 - "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure."
- Humans on earth know God through revelation. John 1:18 - "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." This revelation occurs either through nature in all humans or through the Holy Scriptures, which the Lord imparts only to some.

This revelation can be either internal or external.

III. God has ingrained in all humans a knowledge that God exists, a recognition of God, to express it better, although it may not be expressed in good English. This knowledge that God exists within humans, gradually emerging over the years. It is innate in humanity, much like rationality, which humans do not immediately exercise but gradually reason about things they encounter. The immediacy and exercise of the knowledge of God emerge from one's own nature, without requiring external instruction. This imprint, the acknowledgment of God, is not immediate. Children before birth do not exhibit actions of hearing, seeing, speaking, or thinking; they neither do good nor evil. Romans 9:11 - "(for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls)." They do not sin immediately, nor in the likeness of Adam's transgression. Romans 5:14 - "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was

to come." Those who assert otherwise speak contrary to Scripture, without basis, reason, or experience.

Not through an idea

Some, unsatisfied with the ordinary expressions of natural knowledge of God, want it to be called an idea. However, there is reason to fear that they conceal strange beliefs beneath this strange word. Specifically, they seem to suggest that this uncreated idea reveals to man, like a mirror or example, all the perfections of God and creatures, and that man, being passive, merely contemplates this idea or allows himself to be illuminated by it, can know all the perfections of God and creatures. What else does this imply but that either God is finite, or the idea in man is infinite, and that the knowledge of God must not be obtained from God's revelations and creations or from the creatures themselves as objects, but from within ourselves, from this innate idea? What is this but to make every person infallible, and to set everyone's infallibility directly against another's infallibility, as they have contradictory notions of the same thing? This can only lead to the conclusion that everything is mere fantasies and waking dreams and is only suitable for creating confused and foolish thoughts, to say the least. Therefore, one should avoid the word "idea," which, besides the above, forms images of God in the mind, as the Romans do externally, and both are forbidden in the Second Commandment.

IV. No shapes or images of all things are innate in man; this is emphatically denied. It must be proven. Man does not derive knowledge of things from himself but through the observation of creatures themselves using the five senses. Which image, imagination, or form of animals from other parts of the world, which we have never seen and of which we have never heard, do we

possess? Certainly, none more than if they did not exist or had never existed. Does a child have an image of a lion, dog, cat, or their structure and nature before it is born or immediately after birth? Certainly not. Did Adam give names to the animals according to their kinds and natures? They had to be brought to Adam first. Genesis 2:19 - "Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name." Humans see, hear, taste, smell, and feel various creatures from a young age before paying attention to them and reasoning about them. They become accustomed to them, and over time, they can come to know about these things. To say that, outside their knowledge through the five senses, they must bring images that would be innate before birth is simply to speak in vain and quickly dismiss it as nonsense.

That's how we also live in Christianity. From a young age, we witness God's works in nature without reasoning about them or paying attention to them. We hear about God from an early age. This activates our innate knowledge of a Deity, or to avoid misunderstanding, God-recognition. It becomes active immediately and grows, albeit unevenly, more in some and less in others. That humans bring God into innate ideas through observation of God's works and through education or hearing about God is unreasonable and entirely misguided. Humans, endowed with such qualities and being created with God-recognition just like rationality, are capable of eventually recognizing God directly, and God reveals Himself through this process, as evident in Romans 1:19-20. What may be known of God (not everything about God, not everything God reveals to angels, saints on Earth, or the glorified in heaven, but what the Gentiles can know about Him through nature by observing God's works) is manifest in them (the Gentiles). Not through innate ideas,

but God has revealed it to them. How? Through ideas? No, but through God's works. For His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.

Thus, the Gentiles, who do not possess the Holy Scriptures, had knowledge of God to the extent that the light of nature could teach them. Specifically, the knowledge of God that contradicts unbelief, which the apostle spoke of in verses 16 and 17.

Innate

The fact that humans have such knowledge of God innately is evident from Romans 2:14-15. When Gentiles, who do not have the law (that is, the written law), by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, manifest the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them. Here, the apostle speaks of people who do not have the Holy Scriptures. He says that within their hearts, a law is inscribed, and by nature, they know they must live according to that law. Thus, they become a law to themselves, and their conscience accuses or excuses them depending on whether they live in accordance with the law written in their nature. Since there is a law in this manner, there is also knowledge of the Lawgiver and knowledge that a bond of obedience rests upon them, recognizing that this Lawgiver is God, not a man.

Just as innate reasonableness makes humans capable of acquiring knowledge about things through the investigation of various objects and increasing that knowledge, innate knowledge of God also makes humans capable of increasing their knowledge of God by observing God's works in the created world. It allows them to ascend from visible things to the Invisible. It is impossible for visible things to

teach that there is a God if there were not already an impression of God in the soul.

Or Externally Through the Contemplation of Creatures

This internal knowledge of God can be enhanced by contemplating creatures and their actions and experiences as the actions and guidance of God. This is what we call external knowledge of God because it is obtained from external sources. Romans 1:19-20 supports this concept. Job speaks of this in Job 12:7-9 - "But now, ask the beasts, and they will teach you; and the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you; and the fish of the sea will explain to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this?" Psalm 19:2-4 - "Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." Acts 14:16-17 - "who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless, He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

From all of this, it is clear that humans have both an innate and external knowledge of God by nature.

By Threefold Paths

The wisest philosophers have made great progress in this from contemplating creatures. One can increase in this knowledge through a threefold path:

(a) By the path of denial, denying God all imperfection, deficiency, finitude, and smallness found in creatures.

(b) By the path of excellence, ascribing to God, who is infinite and perfect, all the glories, beauties, and pleasures seen in creatures. For there is nothing in an effect that is not more excellent in its cause.

(c) By the path of causality, ascending from an effect to its cause, and from there to higher causes, finally reaching the First Cause, which is God, and descending from there through various causes to the ultimate effect.

V. The question arises: Is such knowledge of God innate in humans? The Socinians deny all knowledge of God from nature and claim that the knowledge of God arose from the transmission of ancestors since the time of Noah or through a peculiar revelation of God to certain individuals. We say yes.

1. This is evident from all the passages expressed in paragraphs II and IV of the explanation, namely Romans 2:14, 15; Romans 1:19; Job 12:7, 8, 9; Psalm 19:2, 3, 4; Acts 14:16, 17.
2. It is borne out by experience, which teaches that there is no nation under the sun that does not acknowledge a deity. The Gentiles themselves testify to this in their writings. Christians, through seafaring to Asia, Africa, and America, have found that all peoples, no matter how savage, have an impression of a deity, even if some do not exhibit religious practices. Thus, the entire world proclaims: there is a God!
3. Humans' inclination to honor something external and thus bow down in religious devotion demonstrates an impression of God. For otherwise, the noble disposition of humans could not be led to honor a piece of wood or stone unless they believed that a deity resided in or was associated with it, taking pleasure in such service.

4. A savage heathen, even if mute and deaf, can be taught, through instructions with signs and gestures, to have reverence for God and to animate his conscience about sins and virtues. This could not happen if he did not possess an innate seed of knowledge about the Deity.
5. If knowledge of God were not innate in humans, and if they were not capable of ascending from visible things to the invisible God, then the heathen would not sin. For where there is no lawgiver, there is no law, and where there is no law, there is no transgression, and consequently, they could not be condemned. To think otherwise is unreasonable, so it is certain that they do know God.

VI. Objection

1. Whatever is natural to humans is in all and at all times. But knowledge of God is not in all because there are heathens in whom there is the least religion. It is also not always present because David says: Psalm 14:1, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God!'" And Paul says that there are atheists: Ephesians 2:12, "Without God in the world." Response:

(a) This is a *petitio principii*: it is the very point of contention. We affirm that the recognition or impression of a God is at all times and in all, as we have demonstrated with five reasons, namely, in potentiality, though not in actuality, just as rationality is in humans.

(b) Even if there were people who do not exhibit the least religion, it does not follow that there is no impression of a deity hidden in their hearts. We are not talking about the actual practice of religion but about the disposition or form of

recognizing the Deity.

(c) David speaks of fools, of abandoned godless people who, through their conduct, say that they do not honor, fear, and serve a deity and who try to erase the impression of God with their abominations and silence their rising conscience recklessly. But he does not speak of the innate knowledge of the deity.

(d) Paul calls atheists those who do not have God as their reconciled God, as their benefactor, as their salvation, and as the hope of blessedness. So, this text does not pertain to this matter.

VII. Objection 2.

There have always been atheists, that is, godless individuals, God-forsakers, and in our days atheism is emerging clearly in France, in England, and it has even begun in the Netherlands, within various sects. Indeed, some clever individuals promote atheism through their speech, writing, and lifestyle, both covertly and overtly. They endeavor to remove divine authority and infallibility from the Holy Scriptures by distorting them and by making reason the interpreter of the Scriptures.

They may use God's name to avoid being scorned, but they do not understand Him as the eternal, self-existent, self-intelligent Being who existed before there were creatures or created nature. The one who is the Creator, Sustainer, and Ruler of all things, and they do not understand God as such. Instead, they perceive the ordinary nature of all things as if it produces, sustains, and, like the gears in a clock, sets everything in motion. They believe that happiness and unhappiness arise from the motion of nature within individual

bodies, and that under this motion, one must remain calm and still, as it is unchangeable and beyond one's control.

They acknowledge no law other than the course of nature, nothing as sinful except when it goes against their interests and benefits. They define virtue as doing what serves their desires. Their concept of bliss is limited to indulging in eating, drinking, whoring, flaunting, indulging, and satisfying their lusts. Lying and deceiving are good means to attain this bliss or to avoid anything that might disrupt it. They recognize no punishment except harm and disgrace, and no condemnation except an uneasy and sorrowful soul. It is: eat, drink, play; after death, there is no pleasure. Man dies, horse dies: everything dies. Souls, angels, devils, to them, are mere fables, and they scoff at them. They live in complete tranquility, oblivious to a rising, accusing conscience. Thus, the godless Jew Baruch de Spinoza, born in December 1633 in Amsterdam, and who died in The Hague in February 1677, preceded them. It is evident that other atheists have borrowed his views.

From this, it appears that there are atheists, and that there is no innate knowledge of a deity in the human heart. For if it were innate, they could not remove it, as many have done and are attempting to do.

Response: These are the fruits of making reason the interpreter of the Holy Scriptures and of what is to be believed or not. Those who hold this as a fundamental rule, how can they refute the atheistic writings? The arrows rebound and strike them. These are the fruits of distorting and nitpicking at the Holy Scriptures and of ridiculing the practices of true godliness, which they contemptuously call moral lessons. They do not recognize the distinction between the virtues of the pagans and those of the Christians, which arise from faith in

Christ and knowledge of the truth and are practiced in love, fear, and obedience to God. For the knowledge of the truth leads to godliness (Titus 1:1).

These are the fruits of dishonoring God and denying the generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit. First, they posit three collateral persons, leading to three Gods, and they end up with no God. These are the fruits of disdain for the ancient and their pursuit and invention of the new. These are the fruits of doubting the existence of God.

As for the objection, it is of no force; for we do not deny that God may abandon those who labor to erase the impression of God from their hearts and deliver them over to a perverse sense (Romans 1:28), sending them a strong delusion (2 Thessalonians 2:11) so that the knowledge of God lies completely dormant, and a person may become entirely insensible to the existence of God. However, this does not imply that God has not implanted that knowledge and recognition of Himself in humans. Just as when a person lies in a deep swoon, they are still rational, even if the least rationality is not manifest, and they are unaware of their rationality. Likewise, when a person is deprived of all reason due to a fall or blow to the head, having no knowledge, speech, or consciousness about any matter, just as a newborn child is wholly feeble and has hardly any life, can they not be considered rational? The same applies to the recognition of the Deity. The absence of immediate manifestation cannot be used to conclude that there is no inherent disposition or capacity for such manifestation in humans.

VIII. Objection 3. It is known only through faith that God exists; therefore, not from nature, as evident from Hebrews 11:6, which states that one who comes to God must believe that He is.

Response: The same matter can be considered from different perspectives. Nature teaches that God exists as He manifests Himself in the sustenance and governance of all things. Scripture teaches that God exists as He reveals Himself in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:7). In Hebrews 11, the apostle refers to the latter, as in the previously mentioned passages in Romans 1 and 2, and so on, he speaks of the former. The affirmation of God's existence through faith does not exclude knowledge of God from nature but includes and presupposes it.

IX. Concerning the natural knowledge of God, the question arises: Can a person be saved by it? The Socinians answer this question affirmatively, and some Arminians tend in that direction, as do certain Catholics. However, we utterly deny it, and it is evident from:

Arguments:

1. All natural knowledge of God, no matter how extensive it may be, recognizes that God is just to punish sins (Romans 1:32). However, it does not recognize satisfaction for the justice of God or the holiness by which one can stand in God's righteous judgment, without which no one can be saved, as will be demonstrated extensively below. Thus, for them, God remains a God who will by no means hold the guilty innocent and will repay each one according to their deeds.
2. There is no salvation apart from Christ, and there is no other way to salvation than through faith in Christ (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Faith is essential, as without faith, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6), and whoever does not believe is already condemned (John 3:18). Now, it is certain that natural knowledge knows nothing of Christ and faith in Christ because these are revealed only in the Gospel, which has not been

revealed to the Gentiles (Colossians 1:26). Faith comes through the preaching of the Gospel (Romans 10:17). Therefore, it is undeniable that natural knowledge of God cannot lead a person to salvation.

3. The Gentiles, even the wisest and most virtuous among them, are called fools (Romans 1:22). They profess themselves to be wise, but they became fools. They are described as blind and dead (Ephesians 4:18), darkened in understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to the hardness of their hearts. They are atheists, without promises and without hope (Ephesians 2:12), strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope. They are described as in a state of ignorance (Acts 17:30), the times of ignorance.

X. Objection 1.

Romans 1:19, 20 states, "For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them." So that they are without excuse. From this, it is concluded as follows: If the heathens, through the light of nature, knew all that can be known about God, and they were without excuse for not walking according to that light, then this knowledge could lead them to salvation if they followed that light.

Response:

(a) The apostle does not say that they knew all that can be known about God but only what is knowable from nature. The apostle specifically limits this knowledge to "His eternal power and divine nature." Whether this knowledge is sufficient for salvation needs to be proven because we deny it.

(b) Being "without excuse" because one knows God and their obligation does not imply that by the light of nature alone, they could

reach a point where they are blameless and attain salvation, or that this light was sufficient even if they had lived according to it. Rather, it implies the opposite: that the light of nature convinced them that God is just in condemning them, both due to the wickedness of their nature and because they opposed the light within them. This light had no other purpose than to convict them, and even if it could excuse them in some way, it does not imply that it could do so completely.

Objection 2.

Romans 2:4 says, "Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" Acts 17:27 states, "That they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us." These verses show that natural knowledge is capable of leading to repentance, seeking, and finding God. Now, salvation is promised through repentance, and finding God is salvation. Therefore, natural knowledge is sufficient for salvation.

Response:

(a) In Romans 2:4, the apostle speaks to those to whom he preached the Gospel, both Jews and Greeks, addressing them in the second person "you," which is also used throughout the rest of this chapter. So, this verse does not apply here.

(b) The natural knowledge of God does indeed convict of sin and of the propriety and necessity of turning from sin to virtue as far as natural light extends. However, this repentance is not genuine repentance, which involves a complete transformation of a person,

both externally and internally, from spiritual death to spiritual life, without which salvation cannot be expected.

(c) Acts 17:27 addresses idolatrous Gentiles who, in addition to their wooden and stone idols, had an altar inscribed with "the unknown God," whom they worshiped in ignorance. The apostle declares this to be their ignorance and teaches them that natural light did not instruct them to turn away from God to idols; rather, God had given it to them for the purpose of teaching them their duty, which was to seek God, perhaps groping and finding Him. This instructs what fallen humanity must do, but not what it can do after, by their own fault, they have deprived themselves of light and life. They are obligated to seek God or perhaps feel their way toward Him and find Him. However, without the miraculous light that God gives to His children in regeneration, they will never feel their way toward Him and find reconciliation and salvation, even though the natural light could lead them to recognize that God indeed exists and desires to be worshiped in spirit and truth. This "feeling their way" and "finding" of God, of which the apostle speaks here, is vastly different from that finding and feeling of God in which salvation consists.

Objection 3.

Romans 2:14, 15 says that the Gentiles, by nature, do the things of the law, that they are a law unto themselves, and have the work of the law written in their hearts, and their conscience excuses them. Those who do these things are doers of the law, and the doers of the law will be justified. Now, these things are found in the Gentiles who only have the light of nature. So, are they doers of the law and will be justified, and consequently, is natural knowledge of God sufficient to bring a person to salvation?

Response:

To be a law unto oneself, to have the work of the law written in the heart, and to do the things that are in the law, are nothing more than having knowledge of humanity's obligation to God and of God's will. This knowledge operates similarly to the law itself, issuing commands, prohibitions, promises, threats, and convictions. The law does this, and so does the light of nature without having the written law. Therefore, it does not say that they fulfill the law, but rather that they conform to what the law prescribes. If a person does not walk according to that light, it accuses them, and if they do, it excuses them, not entirely, as if they had completely fulfilled the whole law in all things and at all times, and thus been justified by God as a Judge. Rather, it excuses them in a particular act and only to the extent of their understanding.

Objection 4.

If natural knowledge, in itself, is not salvific, it is salvific by consequence. That is, when a person is faithful to the natural light and lives accordingly, God grants them more and such grace that enables them to be saved, according to the promise: Matthew 13:12, "For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance." Examples such as Job, the centurion in Matthew 8:5, 10, and Cornelius in Acts 10 support this claim.

Response:

(a) No one rightly uses the natural knowledge of God; concerning all of humanity, it is as Romans 3:10, 11, 12 states: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." All the virtues of the Gentiles lack the true essence of virtue. They do not stem from faith, they do not conform to the law, they do not aim for the glory of God; instead, they are

tainted with various sinful qualities and circumstances, rendering them nothing more than shining sins.

(b) Even if a Gentile were to live entirely according to their understanding, there is no promise from God that He would then grant them saving grace. God is entirely free, owing nothing to anyone, and His righteousness is so pure that no work of a child of wrath, even one aligned with their understanding, could move Him to draw such a person to Himself and show them grace.

(c) The text from Matthew 13:12 is not applicable here because it does not speak of natural gifts but of gifts of grace. God heaps one grace upon another in His children, and when He grants them the grace to use grace well, He crowns them with even more grace. As Psalm 19:12 says, "In keeping them there is great reward."

(d) The examples are not relevant here since those individuals had the Gospel and lived under its ministry.

It Has Many Useful Purposes

XI. Although natural knowledge of God is not salvific in itself, it is by no means in vain; for it:

(a) Teaches that God exists, that He is an invisible spiritual being, infinite, the first, infinitely superior in essence to all that exists, holy, omnipotent, good, and just.

(b) Declares that God is the cause of everything, including the one who thinks of God, and is therefore the Lord and owner of all. With His influence, He sustains, governs, and controls everything according to His will, so that there is no one who can resist His hand or say, "Why do You do so?"

(c) Asserts that every human being is bound to Him by an unbreakable bond to do His will, which His law represents, and that this will is made known to them by the light of nature.

(d) Enables humanity to recognize their sins and deserving punishment in accordance with God's justice.

(e) Serves to maintain human society.

(f) Renders humanity a suitable subject to be introduced to the path of true godliness through the revelation of the Holy Scriptures by the Spirit of God.

... Is a Remnant of the Ground of the Image of God

XII. Here arises the question: From where does natural knowledge of God and morality have their origin?

They do not come from a new gift from God to humanity after losing the image of God; neither word nor letter in the Bible attests to this, nor does reason teach it, nor is there any necessity for it. Furthermore, it is not a remnant of the image of God, strictly speaking, insofar as it consists of spiritual light, righteousness, and holiness. Instead, it is a remnant of the image of God, broadly speaking, insofar as it includes the basis or subject of the image of God. To understand this clearly, one must consider how humanity was created, what the image of God truly is, and what belongs to it, which will be discussed more extensively in its proper place.

(a) Humanity was not first created in *puris naturalibus*, as a purely natural, rational being, having nothing more than the five senses and the capacity for reasoning. It is my opinion that if the recognition of God had not been part of it, then he would not have been a human.

Instead, humanity was created with the image of God. When God created humanity, He shaped humanity in His image and brought forth the image in the act of creation, as Genesis 1:27 states. Just as the sensitive soul of animals, the growing soul or life of plants, is contained within them not through composition but virtually and effectively, in power and potency, so too did the image of God contain within it natural knowledge of God and morality, undivided, not as separate entities. The image of God permeated everything and animated all the faculties or powers of the soul and its activities, so that everything within it was spiritual and holy, both in its essence and its actions.

(b) Although the image of God in Adam was one and the same, one can distinguish three aspects through mental abstraction:

- The ground or subject;
 - The form or nature, properly speaking, the essence;
 - The consequence.
1. The subject is the soul, which is a spirit, invisible, immortal, and endowed with reason, will, and affections.
 2. The form is spiritual light, righteousness, and holiness.
 3. The consequence is dominion and rulership over the creatures.

Regarding the subject, it is essential to recognize that, taken rightly, it will answer the question and clarify many confusing thoughts on this matter. A painter cannot imprint anyone's image in water or sand but requires a suitable canvas or panel. Similarly, the image of God could not be expressed in wood, stone, or an irrational animal. Instead, it required a rational, willing, intelligent, God-acknowledging soul. In Adam, the subject of the image of God was not distinct from the image of God itself, strictly speaking. However, the image of God permeated everything and animated everything.

We only distinguish these aspects through mental abstraction. When Adam fell, the image of God, strictly speaking, its form of spiritual light, righteousness, and holiness, was entirely eradicated from all faculties or powers of the soul. Nevertheless, he did not lose his human nature. He retained the soul in its essence and its capacities: reason, will, inclination, rationality, and the acknowledgment of God. The acknowledgment of a Godhead is as inherent to humanity as rationality itself. It is found in every human being, and the acknowledgment of a Godhead is the essence of humanity. Yes, through the acknowledgment of a Godhead, humanity is more clearly distinguished from animals than through reason alone. In some animals, there appears a semblance and likeness of reason, albeit without consciousness and consideration of their actions. However, in them, there is no imprint of a Godhead, and it cannot be taught to them. However, God has implanted this acknowledgment in human nature, and if someone has lost all expression of it, it takes only a few hours to bring even the wildest heathen to this practical acknowledgment—a clear proof that it is inherent in human nature.

Is not of the same form and differs from it in its entire nature.

The acknowledgment of a Deity, considered as an inclination, not as an act, is not a remnant of the image of God, strictly speaking, in terms of spiritual light, righteousness, and holiness, as this would lead to insurmountable difficulties. Instead, it can be said that it is a remnant of the image of God in a broader sense, encompassing the subject endowed with the mentioned qualities. However, it truly belongs to human nature, so that the natural knowledge of God and the resulting natural morality do not differ in degree from spiritual light, holiness, and righteousness, in which the form of the image of God exists, but they differ in their entire nature. This becomes evident:

1. Proof: Humanity is spiritually dead. Those who possess a remnant and a certain degree of the image of God are not spiritually blind or dead, as spiritual life consists in possessing the image of God. Each part is of the same nature as the whole; a drop is as much water as the entire sea. However, a person possessing natural knowledge of God and morality is entirely blind and dead. Regarding blindness, see Galatians 4:8, Ephesians 4:18, 1 Corinthians 15:34. Concerning spiritual death, refer to Ephesians 2:1-12. Consequently, there is no remnant of the image of God, nor any particular degree of it, in the natural person. Therefore, it is clear that natural knowledge and morality do not differ in degree but in essence from the image of God, strictly speaking.
2. Proof: Cannot convert oneself. If natural knowledge of God were the image of God itself, differing only in degree, then a person could convert oneself. While a natural person can greatly excel in knowledge and virtue through their natural abilities, even surpassing the truly reborn in some actions, one cannot self-convert, as will be demonstrated in its proper place. Thus, natural knowledge and morality are not the image of God itself, merely differing in degree, but are of an entirely different nature.
3. Proof: Differences in many respects. Both knowledge and morality have:
 - (a) Different causes; one originates from God's initial creative power, the other from God's regenerative power.
 - (b) Different means; one through nature, the other through the Gospel.
 - (c) Different objects; one concerns the knowable aspects of God as revealed in the works of nature, the other as God reveals Himself in the face of Christ.
 - (d) Different effects; one renders the person inexcusable, the

other works salvation. Where all these aspects differ, there is a difference in nature, not merely in degree. Therefore, if the restoration of the image of God does not involve an increase in the natural, but rather a transition to an entirely different kind of knowledge and virtue, then the natural is not a remnant of the image of God, strictly speaking, and it differs not in degree but in its entire nature.

Although these two differ in nature, they are not contradictory, just as one light does not oppose another. The natural makes humanity a suitable vessel to receive both the spiritual and the natural. And because the natural operates within a narrower scope, while the spiritual contemplates considerably higher matters, illuminated by a different light, and the object they both contemplate sees the spiritual with different eyes and aspects, they are not in conflict but rather complement each other.

One must not doubt that God exists.

XIII. So far, we have demonstrated that all people have an impression that God exists. Now, the only remaining question to address is whether, to solidify our knowledge of God's existence, we should temporarily set aside all of God's revelations in nature and in Scripture, as if they did not exist, and consider the internal conviction of God's existence as a prejudice. Should we then entertain the notion that there might be no God or cast doubt upon it, and subsequently examine everything from both sides to arrive at a firmer conclusion that God exists? In other words, can we doubt the existence of God?

Answer. Because our understanding is darkened, a person may indeed doubt whether something that appears to be so is true and, in such cases, further investigation is necessary until one knows it to be

true and is freed from doubt. However, this does not apply to the knowledge of the existence of the Deity. God has implanted this knowledge in nature, and the Holy Scripture presents it to every person, whether wise or foolish. Therefore, one must not doubt the existence of God because:

1. It is to forsake God, willingly acting as if God does not exist or willfully doubting His existence.
2. It contradicts God to His face and assumes that God is lying when, in nature and Scripture, He proclaims His existence so clearly that no person can hide from the voice of God in their conscience.
3. The person who entertains such doubts knows that they are lying, making it impossible for them to doubt in the first place.
4. Willful doubt will never lead to a firmer conviction. Instead, allowing the corrupt intellect and ungodly heart to take hold can lead the doubter towards ungodliness and the loss of salvation, for which God will bring judgment.

But the right path to increase in the knowledge of God is to believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him. The correct course is to act upon what one knows. For if anyone is willing to do God's will, they will recognize whether this teaching is from God. The proper approach is to seek the Lord, who does not remain silent, and to see if one might touch and find Him.

Rebuking Ignorance of God

XIV. Because the knowledge of God is so evident in all people that even the godless, who labor to expel all knowledge and acknowledgment of God from themselves, cannot entirely succeed, though they may temporarily obscure their sense of it and become insensitive to it. This leads to the conviction of many so-called

Christians, who, alongside the natural knowledge, also possess the Word of God, yet fail to hold God in recognition. In fact, they do not attain to the knowledge of God and virtue as much as many pagans have through the light of nature. How will these pagans rise up against such supposed Christians on the day of judgment and approve their condemnation? How terrifying will the judgment be for them when God comes, as stated in 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9: "In flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." Therefore, each person should earnestly seek the knowledge of God, without which there is neither faith, nor love, nor piety, nor salvation. Do not be content with knowledge derived from nature, for it cannot lead to the blessed knowledge of God. Instead, strive to behold God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ and seek the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.

Dispelling Temptations of Atheistic Thoughts From this, the favored ones can discern that these are mere temptations when they are tormented by atheistic thoughts. The disquietudes arising from these thoughts sufficiently indicate that they know God and believe that He exists. Therefore, do not entertain such thoughts; cast them aside. Even if you cannot immediately rid yourself of these temptations, continue to follow your inner conviction. If it troubles you, it will ultimately strengthen you. Devote yourself to reading God's Word and join the company of the devout. Listen to them speak of the delight they find in God. However, beware of reading books by atheists or those that tend in that direction. Guard against associating with utterly godless individuals and engaging in arguments with them on this matter. Instead, cultivate your relationship with the Lord through persistent prayer and by doing

what you know to be God's will. By doing so, you will grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

Chapter 2

On the Word of God

Since the knowledge of God from nature is insufficient for salvation, as previously demonstrated, it was necessary for God to reveal a way through which humanity could attain salvation. We can discern this retrospectively, but nature does not teach it. However, what nature does teach is that God can reveal something beneficial, which has given rise to the hypocrisy of some who pretend to receive divine revelations and the faith of the people in such feigned revelations.

Out of His unfathomable goodness, desiring to have a chosen people on Earth that He would lead to salvation, God revealed the path to salvation, beginning with the first Gospel given to Adam: "The seed of the woman will crush the serpent's head" (Genesis 3:15). To this chosen people, God repeatedly made greater and clearer revelations through His prophets, who preached to the people and were believed by them unto salvation.

Whether these revelations were written down before the time of Moses and handed down in writing to the church at that time, we cannot affirm or deny; it remains unknown. Similarly, whether Moses, under God's command, transcribed these events, which had been recorded in holy and God-inspired writings from the beginning

until his time, through direct revelations from God, or through the infallible traditions passed down by men driven by the Spirit of God, is also unknown. The transmission of knowledge through tradition was more feasible back then, as the patriarchs lived for hundreds of years. Abraham, faithfully passing on the way of salvation to his descendants, could have received all that happened before from a third source: Abraham from Shem, who lived at the same time, Shem from Methuselah, and Methuselah from Adam.

Or unwritten.

However, what we know for certain is that the church during that time was not without the Word of God or divine revelations. Moses makes this known to us in his first book, and the guidance of the chosen ones during that time towards salvation necessitated this. This Word of God during that time is generally referred to as the unwritten Word because it does not appear to have been written down, and it has not come to us in writing. We know no more about it than what Moses tells us. Only Jude speaks of the prophecy of Enoch, which he gives authority to through his account. But inventing another unwritten Word alongside the Holy Scriptures, one that would reveal things not found in the Bible, as the Roman Catholics do to promote their traditions, is to incur the curses pronounced on those who add to the written Word.

Or written, which has various names. II. The written Word of God is commonly referred to in our language as the Bible, derived from a broken Greek word, because it is the book of books. It is also called:

- Isaiah 34:16, "The Book of the Lord";
- Matthew 12:26, "The Book of Moses";
- Luke 4:17, "The Book of the Prophet Isaiah";
- Acts 1:20, "The Book of Psalms";

- Revelation 22:19, "The Book of Prophecy";
- Psalm 40:8, "The Scroll of the Book," as they did not make separate pages but a long scroll that they rolled up and tied with a cord.
- It is also called the Scripture in 2 Timothy 3:15, 16.
- The Scripture in Acts 8:32 because, with the invention of printing still a long way off, everything had to be written with a pen. Due to this, few had the entire Bible since a Bible cost thousands of guilders; some had only one book by a prophet or an evangelist, or a letter. Moreover, most people could not read. It is a wonderful kindness of God, which we cannot consider without gratitude, that printing was invented and put into use shortly before the Reformation. As a result, a poor person can have a Bible for a small price, and it is rare to find a Reformed Christian who does not possess a Bible or at least the New Testament.
- The Holy Scriptures are also called the Word of God in Romans 3:2, "To them were entrusted the oracles of God," because God, accommodating Himself to humanity, revealed the path of truth in a human way and spoke to holy men of God who, being moved by the Spirit of God, spoke to the Church and delivered it to her. Hebrews 1:1 says, "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son."

Is necessary, not with respect to God, but with respect to the church.

III. After God transferred His church to Abraham and his descendants, and primarily preserved it until Christ, it pleased God to give His church a firm and everlasting rule of doctrine and life, which He desired to transmit in writing to His church. Not that there was any necessity on God's part, for by His omnipotence, He could

have revealed the way of salvation to His church without written words and could have preserved the truth among them. However, there was a necessity on the part of humanity, so that the truth would be better preserved against the wickedness of people whose hearts tend toward superstition and physical religion, and who harbor the seeds of various heresies. It was also necessary for protection against the devil's schemes, for he constantly seeks to obscure the truth with the smoke of heresies, knowing that true godliness cannot exist without knowledge of the truth. Moreover, it was necessary so that the Gospel could reach each individual member of the church, be passed down from generation to generation, and spread more rapidly among many nations. Jude had a necessity to write, verse 3. The written Word is a lamp to our feet, Psalm 119:105. "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). Thus, it is necessary.

IV. The Roman Catholics, in order to establish their traditions and superstitious and idolatrous customs more securely, deny the necessity of the Scriptures and argue as follows:

1. Objection. There were indeed particular churches without the written Word, namely when the apostles first preached the Gospel among the Gentiles and established churches among them. Answer. That was only for a short time. Even if they did not immediately have a written Word, they had the word of the apostles who were infallibly moved by the Spirit of God. The Church in general, however, did have it, and one particular church shared it with another (Colossians 4:16). The Jews scattered among the Gentiles had the written Word, and they generally, at least in many places, came to faith first.

2. Objection. Those who cannot read consider the written Word as if it were not written. Answer. They hear it being read, and they hear the Scriptures recounted by the teacher, so their faith relies on both the written Word of God and those who can read.
3. Objection. The people of the Lord would be taught by the Lord Himself and would not need anyone to teach them (Isaiah 54:13, Jeremiah 31:34, 1 John 2:27). Answer. (a) Then certainly the church would not need its traditions, and they should be necessarily cast aside. (b) When God teaches His people through His Word, they are being taught by God. (c) One does not exclude the other; God imparts His Holy Spirit through the means of the Word (Acts 10:44).

Is contained in the books of the OLD TESTAMENT

V. This written Word is contained in the Bible, comprising sixty-six books. Thirty-nine were written before the birth of Christ and are therefore called the Old Testament. 2 Corinthians 3:14, beginning with the first book of Moses, commonly called Genesis, and ending with Malachi. They are divided differently, Luke 24:27, Moses and the prophets; vs. 44, The Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. They are usually divided into:

1. Law books, the five books of Moses.
2. Historical books, from Joshua to Esther.
3. Poetic or poetic books, from Job to the Song of Solomon.
4. Prophets; four major ones, Isaiah to Daniel, and twelve minor ones, Hosea to Malachi.

And from the NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament contains the Holy Scriptures written after the times of Christ, starting with Matthew and ending with Revelation. These are divided into:

1. Historical books, the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.
2. Doctrinal books, from the letter to the Romans to the letter of Jude.
3. A prophetic book, the Revelation of John.

The Apocryphal books do not belong to the Word of God. The Apocryphal, or hidden books, so named because they were not read in the church and were not recognized as divine, do not belong to the Bible. They are merely human writings, much like many today. They were written before Christ's time, but not by a prophet, not in Hebrew but in Greek, and they were not accepted by the Jews, to whom the words of God were entrusted (Romans 3:2). They contain many errors and contradictions, contrary to the Canonical or Rule Books. For a thorough examination of this, refer to the excellent preface of the Dutch Translators before the Apocryphal books, which is sufficient to shame the Roman Catholics who, in later days, wanted to pass off these books as Canonical.

Because Holy Scripture is the only rule of doctrine and life, the devil endeavors, through his instruments, to overturn or obscure it as much as he can. Therefore, we shall also strive to defend it, and for that purpose, we will discuss:

1. Its cause, both primary and secondary causes.
2. The subject matter.
3. The form.
4. The purpose.
5. The recipient to whom it is given.
6. The utility.

With each of these, we will address the points of contention that can be raised.

VI. 1. The cause of Holy Scripture is either the primary or the secondary causes. The primary, indeed, the sole-giving, Cause is God. This is evident:

1. Throughout the entire Scripture, one finds phrases like "God spoke. God said. Thus says the Lord," and the like.
2. God Himself not only proclaimed the law with a loud voice, Exodus 20, but also inscribed it on two stone tablets, Exodus 24:12.
3. God explicitly commanded the holy writers to write:
 - Exodus 17:14. Write this as a memorial in a book.
 - Exodus 34:27. Write down these words for yourself.
 - Revelation 1:11. Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches.
 - The same is true in various other passages: Isaiah 30:8; Jeremiah 30:2; Hebrews 2:2. Notice also the titles that mention the qualities of the writers, whether prophet, evangelist, or apostle.
4. The testimonies of the entire Scripture:
 - 2 Timothy 3:16. All Scripture is breathed out by God.
 - 2 Peter 1:21. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
 - 2 Samuel 23:2. The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue.

This is to refute the Roman Catholics, who claim that Holy Scripture was not written by God's command but on various occasions to secretly undermine the Scripture and give credence and belief to their traditions. Their argument is that God would have left behind a well-organized book in which all points of faith were orderly written, with words and definitions such that no misunderstandings or heresies could arise.

(a) Who is the Lord's counselor? Who can say, "Why do you do that?"

- 1 Corinthians 3:19. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God.
- He makes the wisdom of the world foolishness, 1 Corinthians 1:20.
- 1 Corinthians 1:25. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men.
- 1 Corinthians 2:14. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him. Errors and heresies do not arise from Holy Scripture but from the corrupt human understanding. 1 Corinthians 11:19. For there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.

(b) We do not deny that some things were written on occasion, but that does not negate that God inspired and caused them to be written.

So, the Word must be recognized as divine. VII. Whether Holy Scripture is truly God's Word and of divine authority, both regarding history, as many words and deeds of the ungodly are recounted, and regarding the rule of doctrine and life, it is necessary for people to know and consider the Scripture as God's Word. The question here is: How can a person be assured that Holy Scripture is God's Word? Answer: The Roman Catholics say that one must believe it because

the Church says so. We say that the true Church, believing and proclaiming that Holy Scripture is God's Word, is indeed a means by which the Holy Spirit leads people to the Word and moves them to believe it. However, the Church is not the foundation on which the faith that the Scripture is God's Word rests, nor by which a person is assured of it. Instead, Holy Scripture, through the appointed signs of its divinity, is the very foundation and ground by which one believes it to be divine, through the working of the Holy Spirit speaking in the Word. The authority of the Word depends on the Word itself.

VIII. The church cannot be the foundation for someone believing that the Scripture is God's Word. Because:

Proof 1.

1. The church derives all its authority from the Word. One cannot recognize a church as the true church except from God's Word, as it possesses the teachings and qualities that Scripture says only the true church has. Ephesians 2:20. Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. 2 John 10. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house. Romans 16:17: Turn away from them. If one recognizes from the Word alone whether a church is the true church of God, then the Scripture must be acknowledged as God's Word before the church is recognized as the true church. Furthermore, one cannot accept the testimony of the church until it is recognized as the true church. So, the Word is believed to be God's Word not because the church says so, but rather the church is believed to be the true church because the Word says so. The house rests on the foundation, not the other way around. The effect depends on the cause, not the cause on the effect.

Counterargument. It can coexist: Christ bore witness to John the Baptist, and John in turn bore witness to Christ. Response. It is one thing to bear witness, and another to be the foundation of faith. Christ was the truth itself and gave testimony with authority, but John was merely a means of revelation, as every teacher is today. Nevertheless, they are not the foundation upon which the faith of the listeners rests, that Jesus is the Christ. Instead, one must say with the Samaritans, John 4:42: They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

Proof 2. Everything receives its authority from its source. The basis for regarding someone's words is the person themselves. The government, when giving laws, imparts to its laws the authority of command, but the laws do not receive that from the person who makes them known by reading or posting. In the same way, the Word is recognized as having divine authority solely because God speaks it: Isaiah 1:2. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken. The church is merely the proclaimer.

Proof 3. God does not need human testimony. If the church gave authority to the Word concerning us, then the church would have more esteem with us than God Himself, for the one who makes someone's words credible and convincing is greater than the one who speaks them. But God has no superior; therefore, no one can give authority to His words. John 5:34. I receive not testimony from man, says the Lord Jesus. Although John testified about Him, i.e., made it known that He was the Christ, yet the Lord Jesus does not want anyone to believe Him or recognize Him as the Christ for that reason; it should only provide an occasion. John 5:36. But I have a greater testimony than that of John; for the works which the Father

has given me to complete, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me, that the Father has sent me.

IX. Objection 1.

1 Timothy 3:15. Which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. What provides support and confirmation to the truth, also gives it the authority to be accepted as truth. In this case, it's the church to the truth; therefore, etc. Response. I firmly deny the conclusion of the initial statement. Outstanding proponents are often referred to as pillars of the church, both in everyday language and in Scripture, as seen in Galatians 2:9, where James, Cephas, and John are considered pillars. Nevertheless, this does not grant the church the authority to be recognized as the true church. Similarly, the church is the guardian, defender, and protector of the Word. If there were no church, the Word of God and the truth contained within it would quickly vanish from the world. The expressions "pillar and support" do not imply giving authority or credibility but rather preservation and protection. The church is entrusted with the words of God, as Romans 3:2 states, so it must safeguard them, defend them, and make them known everywhere. What credibility does this give to the Word?

Objection 2.

No one can know that the Bible is God's Word unless the church says so. God does not speak from heaven, declaring that the Bible is His Word; there must be someone who proclaims it so that people can hear it.

Response.

(a) No one can know what laws the government gives unless a herald proclaims them, yet the herald does not give authority to the laws. It is similar here.

(b) It is not certain that no one can know that the Bible is God's Word unless the church says so. It happens that someone, born and raised far from people and without knowledge of any church, may happen upon the Bible in their home, read it diligently, develop an interest in its contents, and be converted through it as a means, recognizing that the Bible is from God and growing to love the Word. I have known such a person, and what happened to them can happen to others. Hundreds of people know almost nothing about the church, have no connection with it, and yet they acknowledge the Bible as God's Word and even seek the true church from the Word. When the church places the Bible in our hands and says, "This is God's Word," or when someone else does so, it can prompt someone to investigate, and in their search, they may find evidence of its divine nature within the Word.

(c) Some might argue that the Roman Catholic Church is the true church and that it gives authority to the Word. However, we believe that the Bible is God's Word, not because the Roman Catholic Church says so; in fact, we declare it not to be God's church. So, how do we recognize, with even greater certainty than they do, that the Bible is God's Word, since we do not base it on the acknowledgment of the Roman Catholic Church? It is clear from this that the Scripture does not derive its divine authority from the pope, papal church councils, or the entire power of the Roman Catholic Church.

Objection 3.

The church existed before the Word and is more familiar than the Word, so the church gives divine authority to the Word. Response.

The church is not older than the Word; quite the opposite is true. The Word is the seed of the church. The first Gospel existed before the church and served as a means by which the church came into being. It is true that there was a church before the Scriptures were included in the Bible, but the church did not give credibility to the books of Moses and the subsequent Scriptures. If someone is born into the ministry today, the Word and the church are both present simultaneously, and people usually develop a belief in the Bible as God's Word before they have a full understanding of the church's teachings and notice what the church says about the Word. This shows that the church is not more familiar than the Word; quite the opposite. Even if the church were older and more familiar, it would not grant the Word divine authority.

But regarding the Word itself.

X. Therefore, the church does not impart divine authority to the Word in the eyes of humanity. People do not believe it to be divine because the church says so; rather, Holy Scripture itself reveals its divinity to the attentive reader or listener.

(a) The titles on the books and epistles, phrases like "thus says the Lord," "the Lord speaks," "hear the word of the Lord," demonstrate this.

(b) The profound mysteries of God and divine matters, which nature does not reveal and no human could conceive, and which, without the work of the Holy Spirit, cannot be understood; the holiness and purity of the commandments and the path laid out for humans, which make all other writings not originating from this Word appear earthly, crude, vain, and foolish, and which cause all writings taken from it to shine like paintings compared

to a living person—these aspects reveal the Word's divinity to humanity.

(c) The power that the Word exerts over people's hearts: where the Gospel is proclaimed, it captivates hearts and brings them under its influence. The more believers are oppressed and persecuted, the greater the power the Word wields.

(d) The wondrous light that the Word brings to the soul, both inwardly and outwardly, the sweet comfort, and the indescribable joy with which believers are filled, enabling them to endure all suffering in love and joy and to willingly undergo martyrdom.

(e) The prophecies made thousands of years in advance, revealing what would happen later, and the precise fulfillment of these prophecies—these and similar things are rays of the Word's divinity. They illuminate and convince humanity of its divine nature through their own light.

The OLD TESTAMENT in the Hebrew language, the NEW TESTAMENT in Greek.

XII. These, guided by the Holy Spirit concerning matters, words, and style, wrote them in the language spoken by the church so that they could understand it. The Scriptures of the Old Testament are written in Hebrew because the church existed in that nation. Only a few chapters are written in Chaldean, a language so close to Hebrew that someone who understands Hebrew can comprehend Chaldean almost entirely. The Scriptures of the NEW TESTAMENT are written in Greek because that language was the most common among the Gentiles. Both of these languages have remained pure in the Holy Scriptures. Though there may be errors in some copies, and heretics

have attempted to corrupt certain passages, faithful preservation by the Lord's providence and careful attention by both the Jewish and Christian communities to copies and prints have maintained their integrity.

Which are authentic by themselves. These languages alone are authentic, possessing authority to be believed and accepted by themselves. God allowed His Word to be written in these languages through the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit. All translations into other languages must be tested against these original texts. Anything that does not align with them must be rejected because God did not have His Word written in any language other than Hebrew and Greek. The Roman Catholics regard the ordinary Latin translation as authentic, although some among them, now also understanding Hebrew and Greek, hold different opinions and express them. Others would rather perish than come to know the truth. Their objections to the authenticity of the original languages are so feeble that they do not deserve a response.

II. The content is the covenant of grace.

XIII. The substance or content of the Word is the covenant of grace or the perfect rule of faith and life. This rule is contained in the Old and New Testaments, not partially in each so that the OLD TESTAMENT would have been insufficient for the church in the OLD TESTAMENT, and the NEW TESTAMENT would not be able to save anyone without the OLD TESTAMENT, as if they had to be absolutely combined. Likewise, if a book were lost, it would mean that a portion of the rule was missing, and the rule would not be perfect. However, one book or even a few, for example, the books of Moses or the Gospels, completely contain the entire rule of faith and life. If someone had only these and understood them correctly, they

could be saved. The Lord's marvelous goodness is shown in giving us many Scriptures through various prophets, evangelists, and apostles, all testifying to the same truth. However, one may explain certain matters more fully and clearly than another. Thus, all the books, both of the Old and New Testaments, bind us to believe and do everything commanded by God in them, and nothing else should be presented for belief or practice. Concerning this, these questions are raised.

XIV. Question: Is the Word of God a wholly perfect rule for humanity concerning faith and life, so that nothing needs to or can be added to it? Answer: The Roman Catholics deny that the Word of God is such a perfect rule and argue that unwritten traditions or teachings must be accepted and obeyed with the same reverence and faith as the written Word of God. We, on the other hand, firmly hold that the written Word of God is a wholly perfect rule and reject all unwritten traditions concerning doctrine or life as human inventions. This is evident:

Proof 1. Is perfect. Psalm 19:8. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. Here, the prophet David speaks not only of a perfection found in every part of the Word but also of how the Word is in relation to humanity. It can grant wisdom for salvation and convert the soul. Therefore, the Word encompasses everything necessary for doctrine and life. If it did not encompass everything, it could not convert people or provide sufficient wisdom.

Proof 2. Leads to salvation. The written Word is given for the purpose of obtaining life through it. John 20:31. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name. This purpose could

not be fully achieved if the written Word were not sufficient and a perfect rule for doctrine and life. Therefore, it is perfect.

Proof 3. Is useful for all godliness. The written Word is capable of teaching truth, rebuking falsehood, correcting wrongdoing, and showing what is good so that people may be complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work. In short, it can make people wise for salvation. One cannot desire more than this; when one possesses this, it is enough. Now, the Scriptures have this power and usefulness, so they are indeed perfect. Consider 2 Timothy 3:15, 16, 17. The Holy Scriptures... are able to make you wise for salvation. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Objection 1.

It says "useful," not "sufficient." Ink is useful and necessary for writing, but not sufficient. Response: (a) It states that the Word can make one wise for salvation. (b) Being useful for such purposes is sufficient; nothing more can be required. The sun is useful for illumination, which is as good as sufficient; no other light is needed or useful when the sun shines upon us.

Objection 2.

The apostle is referring to the OLD TESTAMENT. If that were sufficient for salvation, then the NEW TESTAMENT would not be necessary. But it is necessary, so here "useful" means advantageous, but not sufficient. Response:

(a) The OLD TESTAMENT was sufficient until the coming of Christ, who was promised in the OLD TESTAMENT. The NEW TESTAMENT does not present a different doctrine or way of life than the OLD TESTAMENT; it affirms and extends what the OLD TESTAMENT promised and declares its fulfillment. If the OLD TESTAMENT was so useful that it was sufficient for that time, then the NEW TESTAMENT, added to the OLD TESTAMENT, is even more useful and sufficient now.

(b) When Paul wrote this to Timothy, there were already several writings of the NEW TESTAMENT, so they are also included in this statement.

Proof 4. Nothing may be added or taken away. One must not add or take away from all the curses written in the Word, for the written Word of God is a perfect rule of doctrine and life. See this: Deuteronomy 4:2. You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it. Revelation 22:18, 19. If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life. Galatians 1:8. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed!

Objection 1.

Moses speaks of what he spoke, not what he wrote. John speaks only of the book of his Revelations, not the entire Bible. Response: Moses wrote what he spoke as a faithful servant of God, as commanded by the Lord. John concluded with his Revelations, sealing it at the very end of the book as a seal upon all the revealed and written will of God in the Word. The reason for this prohibition is the same for every

book of Holy Scripture and thus applies to the entire Scripture: because God gave it, and no other.

Objection 2.

The prophets added much to Moses, and the apostles to both. Response: Not regarding the rule of doctrine and life, but only in terms of explanations, expansions, applications, all through the inspiration and command of God. Paul proclaimed the entire counsel of God, Acts 20:27, and yet he said nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses declared, Acts 26:22.

Objection 3.

The texts speak of adding or taking away something that contradicts what is written and corrupts it, not something that aligns with it and is helpful. Response: Anything added to a perfect work corrupts it. The texts do not only speak of what contradicts it but also of what might exist alongside, in addition to, above, or beyond what is written, Galatians 1:8.

Proof 5.

All traditions are rejectable human inventions. All traditions or teachings outside the written Word are human inventions and ordinances. There are no traditions of Christ and the apostles. Christ or an apostle never directs us to unwritten traditions, but always to the Word, Isaiah 8:20; Luke 16:29; John 5:39; 2 Peter 1:19, 20. God condemns all human ordinances, Matthew 15:9, "In vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." Roman Catholic traditions are superstitious, false, and contrary to God's written Word.

Objection 1.

XV. Many books of Holy Scripture are lost, such as:

- The book of the Wars of the Lord,
- The book of the Upright,
- The book of the Chronicles of Israel,
- The book of the prophets Nathan and Gad,
- The letter to the Laodiceans,
- All the words and deeds of Christ are not written down;
- It is believed that the apostles also wrote other letters we do not have; therefore, the Bible is not perfect.

Response.

(a) These books were never a rule of doctrine and life; the Scriptures also mention other books written by Gentiles, Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12.

(b) We believe that Christ spoke and did many things, and the apostles wrote many letters to the churches, also inspired by the Holy Spirit, which had to be considered divine by those particular churches, not received by other churches, and never reached the church of God after the apostolic era. However, this does not make the Scripture we have incomplete; it remains a perfect rule of doctrine and life. This is because the entire Gospel is contained therein, and nothing outside the Scriptures has ever been said or written about Christ and the apostles that could serve as a rule of doctrine and life for the church. Even if we had fewer books, we would still have a perfect rule. However, it is the Lord's kindness to provide us with the same Gospel through many individuals and with various expansions, applications, and explanations. What we have is more than sufficient. One must distinguish the essence of a matter from the circumstances.

Objection 2.

John 16:12. I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. This suggests that many necessary things are not written down, so the Scriptures are not perfect and must be supplemented by traditions.

Response:

After Christ's resurrection, the apostles grew stronger in faith and grace, and Christ remained with them for forty days, speaking about the things concerning the kingdom of God, Acts 1:3. Therefore, Christ did tell them those things which they could not bear before. They were driven by the Holy Spirit and led into all truth, John 16:13. And the Spirit would teach them all things and bring to their remembrance all things that the Lord Jesus had said to them, John 14:26. So, nothing is left for traditions, and the Holy Scripture is and remains perfect because the apostles wrote everything that Jesus did and taught, everything necessary for our salvation, Acts 1:1.

Objection 3.

2 Thessalonians 2:15. Hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. Here, the apostle explicitly mentions traditions by word and distinguishes them from traditions by letter, implying that there are traditions that are not written down but must still be observed.

Response:

The apostle not only wrote but also preached through the living voice, but he did not preach anything different from what he wrote, and he did not write anything different from what he preached. It

was essentially the same gospel. Therefore, the words "by word or by letter" only refer to different methods of presentation and do not introduce different subjects. So, there is no room for traditions in this regard.

Objection 4.

The Jewish church instituted various practices and handed them down to future generations, such as fasting in the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months (Zechariah 7:5 and Zechariah 8:19), the days of Purim (Esther 9:21-26), and the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple (John 10:22). Similarly, the Reformed church has its own practices, so it is right and necessary to uphold traditions now.

Response:

Fasting was commanded by God, the necessity determined the timing, and that circumstance was left to the discretion of the church, Joel 2. Thanksgiving days were also commanded, and the time was determined by events and the church, but continuing these practices through an institution of the church for future generations, unsupported by the Word, is reprehensible. The church should not adhere to such practices, which are similar to the so-called holidays among us that should be removed. For more on this, refer to Jacobus Koelman's writings on holidays, "Res Judicata," and others of his learned and godly writings. Other external regulations and circumstances of worship are essentially commanded by the Word and can be adapted to different times and places. However, all superstition must be far removed, and it should not touch either doctrine or life. Therefore, this does not in any way diminish the perfection of the rule, nor is the practice of unwritten traditions beneficial.

The OLD TESTAMENT remains a rule in the NEW TESTAMENT

XVI. Question: Is the OLD TESTAMENT a rule of doctrine and life for Christians in the NEW TESTAMENT, and does it continue to be so? The Mennonites say no, we say yes. Our proof is:

Proof 1. Contains the same Gospel.

1. The OLD TESTAMENT contains the same matters, the same Gospel, so that the OLD TESTAMENT and the NEW TESTAMENT are one and the same in essence, differing only in circumstances and manner of administration. The OLD TESTAMENT looked to Christ who would come, and thus, it was served through images and shadows. The NEW TESTAMENT looks to Christ who has come, and therefore, it is served without shadows. The OLD TESTAMENT is a rule as much as the NEW TESTAMENT, as is evident everywhere in both Testaments and will be further demonstrated in the future. That's why the apostle, when preaching the NEW TESTAMENT, said he would speak nothing but what Moses and the prophets had spoken concerning what would happen, Acts 26:22.

Proof 2. Handed down to the one Church.

2. There is only one Church from the beginning of the world to its end, and the books of the OLD TESTAMENT were handed down to the Church as a rule. Therefore, they are also handed down to the Church of the NEW TESTAMENT. Even the ceremonies that were instituted for a time do not apply to us in the NEW TESTAMENT to be practiced but rather for us to learn the truth, the wisdom of God, and to better understand Christ in all circumstances.

Proof 3. The Church of the NEW TESTAMENT is also built on the prophets.

The Church of the NEW TESTAMENT is built on both the foundation of the prophets and the apostles, Ephesians 2:20. Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Thus, the writings of the prophets are as much a rule for us as the writings of the apostles.

Objection.

The prophets referred to are the prophets of the NEW TESTAMENT, as can be read in 1 Corinthians 12:18; Ephesians 3:5; Ephesians 4:11. This is evident from the order, as the apostle first mentions apostles and then prophets.

Response:

(a) The prophets of the NEW TESTAMENT mentioned in those passages did not leave behind any writings, so the Church cannot be built on them.

(b) When the NEW TESTAMENT speaks of prophets, it generally refers to the prophets of the OLD TESTAMENT, Luke 24:25, 27.

(c) The fact that the apostles are mentioned before the prophets does not support that view. Prophets are mentioned before evangelists in Ephesians 4:11, yet the evangelists are greater than the prophets of the NEW TESTAMENT.

Proof 4. The teaching is confirmed by the OLD TESTAMENT. Christ and the apostles confirm their teaching from the OLD TESTAMENT. They refer us to the Scriptures of the OLD TESTAMENT and demonstrate the usefulness of the OLD TESTAMENT for us in the NEW TESTAMENT.

- John 5:39. Search the Scriptures... they are the ones that testify about Me.
- Romans 15:4. Whatever was written in the past (the books of the OLD TESTAMENT) was written for our (in the days of the NEW TESTAMENT) instruction, etc.
- Luke 16:29. They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.
- 2 Peter 1:19. We have the prophetic word, which is very sure, and you do well to pay attention to it.
- Acts 17:11. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. All of this clearly shows that the Scriptures of the OLD TESTAMENT are a rule for us as much as the NEW TESTAMENT.

XVII. Objection 1.

Hebrews 8:13. In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. If it was made obsolete and ready to vanish away then, it has long since disappeared; therefore, the OLD TESTAMENT no longer concerns us. Answer: The apostle is not speaking of the books of the OLD TESTAMENT, for he praises them and declares them useful for instruction, refutation, etc., Romans 15:4, 2 Timothy 3:15, 16, 17. But he speaks of the ministry of the covenant, which will be demonstrated further in detail later on. Although the ministry of the covenant through the ceremonies has ceased, this does not mean that the books of the OLD TESTAMENT cease to be a rule.

Objection 2.

Matthew 11:13. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. So they must cease with the time of John. Answer: The prophets and the ceremonial laws proclaimed that Christ would come, and John proclaimed that Jesus had come. Where the fulfillment is, the promise ceases; they are said not to prophesy further in that sense. However, they continued in other respects: they also prophesied about Jesus' suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and return for judgment. In that sense, they could not end with John because they had not yet been fulfilled. The Lord Jesus is speaking in this text about the predictions and fulfillments but not about whether the prophetic Scriptures continue to be a rule; one has its end with Christ's coming, the other always remains.

Objection 3.

Romans 10:4. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. Answer: The apostle is not speaking of an end of durability, for Christ says that He did not come to abolish the law or the prophets, and not one jot or tittle of the law will pass until heaven and earth pass away, Matthew 5:17, 18. Rather, he speaks of the end that is aimed at—the end of the law is to lead to Christ, to obtain justification through Him, who fulfilled the law through suffering and living.

3. The form, the meaning of Scripture.

XVIII. The form of Holy Scripture is external or internal. • The external form is the neatness, clarity, and appropriateness of the style, most powerfully expressing each matter individually and in its coherence, and at the same time displaying the majesty of God, by whose Spirit it is written; a worldly person seeks embellished words but will seldom be able to appreciate the wondrous power, dignity, loftiness, and elegance in the Word's style, where the finest orations

of orators are but rustic and childlike language; yet they are not so learned that they can see it. • The internal form is the neat and true meaning, corresponding to the thoughts and purpose of the speaker, who is God. • The meaning of each word, sentiment, or speech is not twofold, threefold, or manifold, but one and the same.

(a) For it is known that the form of a thing can only be one.

(b) Truth is also only one.

(c) Scripture is understandable and clear.

(d) The sincerity of the speaker requires him to express his meaning singly and simply, without confusing or misleading the listener with ambiguous words.

This meaning is called the literal meaning; it is either single or composite. • The single meaning is either proper or figurative.

- The proper one is when thoughts are expressed through words that, by usage, primarily express things, as in "God is just, man is sinful."
- The figurative literal meaning is when one expresses oneself with words derived from their primary and proper meaning to make one's meaning clearer, more pleasant, and more powerful. These ways of speaking are diverse and are explained in rhetoric. For example, "Herod is a fox," meaning he is cunning. • The composite meaning is when both the example and the antitype are presented together, with one part of the meaning in the example and the other in the antitype. For example, John 3:14, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up."

Each matter, considered on its own, has a complete meaning, but the intention is only expressed by combining these two meanings. The meaning of Scripture that the Holy Spirit intends is always just one, and one should rely on it without suspicion. The same matter can be considered in various respects and can be presented in various expressions, but each expression is suitable only in the respect in which it is considered or understood. These respects and expressions in Scripture are complementary and harmonious, not diverse, much less contradictory; they do not create different meanings for the same matter or text.

The Roman Catholic fourfold sense is rejected.

The Roman Catholics, in their attempt to ease the way for their pope to sit on the judgment seat more comfortably, claim that in one and the same place there are four senses:

- A literal sense, which we alone acknowledge.
- An allegorical or other meaning, where spiritual matters are meant beneath physical ones, as in Gal. 4:24; Hagar and Sarah represent two covenants, or when a physical matter is presented to instruct and motivate a person in their duty, as in 1 Cor. 9:9: "Does God take care for oxen?" encouraging the church to support its ministers.
- An analogical sense, where earthly things signify heavenly things, like Jerusalem representing heaven in Revelation 21:2.
- A tropological or moral sense, where something is conveyed for practical application and improvement of life.

If one were to say that one place has such and another place has such a meaning, we would gladly concede; for that would be the literal sense intended by the Holy Spirit, whether single or composite, proper or figurative. However, to attribute these four senses to every

passage is sheer absurdity. We can tolerate that various applications are made on the occasion of a passage, and if someone acted unwisely or went too far, it could be overlooked. But to claim that the Holy Spirit intends all four senses in every text is to make Holy Scripture foolish; although God is infinite and can contain many, even infinite, things at once, He is not speaking to Himself but to human beings with limited understanding, desiring to be clearly understood in His communication with them. People do not learn their language from the Bible, but the Bible speaks in the language of the people, even more neatly, distinctly, clearly, and understandably than the most intelligent notary could do, so that there is no room for misunderstanding. Misunderstandings arise from the obscurity or stubbornness of people.

Various questions must be answered regarding this.

Words do not mean all they can.

XIX. Whether the words in Holy Scripture mean all they can mean? Answer: Who would think that there would ever be those who would say yes to this? And yet there are many such today. We say plainly, no.

Proofs

1. This is evident from the four reasons we provided above in paragraph 18 against the multiple senses of the Word. Apply them here.
2. Then nothing in the entire Scripture would be certain; various beliefs would all be simultaneously true, for words could mean that, and one person takes them in one sense, another in another; it's all good, people must tolerate each other's beliefs, for one can justify it by the meaning of the words. It is obvious

to all that this must follow, and even if some do not use it in this way, those who associate with such people do, so truth and falsehood can be united.

3. The worst and most ludicrous interpretations that can be imagined would have to be accepted, as several men have shown in many places in Scripture. Such interpretations cannot be rejected by those who uphold this proposition, and they themselves see that it is ridiculous. Thus, this rule is a terrible desecration of the Word and a dishonor to God, as if He spoke ambiguously or as if He expressed many, and even contradictory, meanings in one and the same passage.
4. One may not act this way with human writings, wills, obligations, and receipts; anyone who wanted to do so would be abhorred by everyone. Much less should one act this way with the Word of the living God, who expresses each matter and each sense in the most appropriate, most serious, clearest, and most powerful manner. For even though God could encompass in one concept everything that is true, so to speak of God, He does not speak to Himself but to people in a human manner, as people speak and can best understand.

Objection. This rule applies only if the sense is not against the regularity of faith, against the purpose of the Holy Spirit, and against coherence.

Answer:

(a) If one takes the qualification in its true meanings, it becomes a contradiction in adjecto, and the latter undermines the former. Because then a word cannot mean in the entire Bible what it can mean, since that qualification brings it to one meaning.

(b) That qualification does not suffice, as several have shown in various texts, because according to that rule, words can mean whatever they can, and one can, and must, according to that rule, also say that the Holy Spirit intends all those meanings of the Word, and they can make the coherence as they see fit. These qualifications are necessary in themselves to understand the correct meaning of every text and are powerful for those who say that every word does not mean what it can mean, but only means what those circumstances require.

XX. Objection 1.

Many texts allow two or three meanings; this is found in all kinds of learned commentators, and what more do we hear from pulpits, even from those who oppose this rule, than phrases like "this word can be taken in this way" and "it can also be taken in this way." From this, it appears that even the opponents are of the same opinion, that words mean whatever they can.

Answer:

When commentators in their writing or speaking enumerate the various meanings of a word, they do not mean to say that that text or that word in that text has various meanings but thereby confess their obscurity, that they cannot understand that text well and dare not assert with certainty what meaning the Holy Spirit intends. When one speaks of emphasis, one compares the original text with the translation.

Objection 2.

That rule sheds great light on understanding the Word of God; then one understands it in its full force and emphasis.

Answer:

(a) It brings great obscurity in understanding the Word, unless one rejects the love of truth, then one can quickly understand the Word through that rule because then everything is fine, and one cannot go wrong because the words also mean what one interprets them as most readily.

(b) God's Word always speaks with emphasis, and all words are set forth in their full force, no word or phrase has half force. When one wants to present an error or is embarrassed to maintain one's errors, one uses words with full force, with emphasis, as if that were the true meaning of a passage. Scholars know such tricks; the simple must be cautious when they hear such words.

Continuation.

Everyone acknowledges that words are sometimes taken in a narrow sense and sometimes in a broad sense, encompassing many things at once. Some words or phrases are taken so broadly that they include all the consequences naturally flowing from them. From this, it is evident that words can be taken both in their full force and emphasis and not in their full force.

Answer: These are just different meanings of words. In one context, it means one thing, and in another context, something else. When it means one thing in one place, it does not necessarily mean everything it means in other places but only that which it means in that particular context. Some words signify a particular thing, while others are general and encompass everything that falls under that general word. This is the literal meaning of those words or expressions, but it does not imply a greater or lesser force or emphasis of the words.

Doctrines are presented either with explicit words or through necessary consequences.

XXI. Question: Whether all doctrines of faith and life are presented in explicit words in the Scriptures and should not be accepted as true unless explicitly stated, or whether it is part of the meaning of a passage what is implied by necessary consequence?

Answer: The Mennonites, in order to deny infant baptism, say the first, while we say the second, namely, not what people deduce from it through their dark and corrupted understanding but what lies within it and reveals itself through a necessary consequence. This is evident:

1. Man is rational, and his speech is rational. In all his interactions, he generally speaks through consequences. Now, God speaks to man in a human manner and also through consequences. These are sometimes expressed, and sometimes the matter is only mentioned in which the consequence lies. Consider one of the innumerable expressed consequences: "Christ, the Head of believers, rose from the dead." In this statement, it is implied that all who are members of Christ must also have spiritual life. The latter is included in the former and is deduced from it, as in Romans 6:4, "That like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." As an example of an implied consequence, take Exodus 3:6, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." In this statement:

(a) It is implied that those who had died long before Moses' time were still alive.

(b) And that there will be a resurrection of the dead. See this in Matthew 22:31-32, "But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read... I am the God of Abraham... God is not the God of the dead but of the living."

2. The purpose of Scripture is instruction, exhortation, rebuke, reproof, and comfort (Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:16). No one can make any application to themselves or others unless through a consequence, by saying, "God says this in His Word, therefore, you should do this, refrain from that, so you are mistaken in your understanding, so you should not be discouraged but take courage." After all, our names are not in the Bible, so how can anyone use the Bible for their benefit except through application? Now, all application is made through a consequence.

XXII. Objection 1:

Then our faith would rest on a fallible foundation because drawing consequences can be mistaken, and often, human understanding goes astray in it; what one person believes to be a good consequence from a passage, another person refutes.

Answer:

(a) From "can miss" to "does miss" is not a consequence; our eye can miss, but it generally doesn't. What one person cannot see because they are nearsighted or have weak vision, another person can see clearly.

(b) Our faith does not rest on reason, by which one draws consequences from a passage, but on the text itself. Reason is only a means by which one sees that a matter lies in the text, which could

not be derived from a natural principle but only follows from a revealed truth on which faith rests. Our reason does not introduce anything into the text that was not there before; it extracts and shows what was already in it, and faith does not rest on the reasoning but on the Word of God.

Objection 2:

2 Peter 1:20 says, "No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation," so everything that we must believe must be stated explicitly in the Word so that no private interpretation is needed.

Answer:

Private interpretation is not the understanding and knowledge of a text obtained through reasoning. Otherwise, the Scripture would not be profitable for teaching, etc., (2 Timothy 3:16). Then the exhortation to "search the Scriptures" (John 5:39), joining spiritual things with spiritual, would be in vain, and one could neither follow nor heed it. It is certain that each person individually must and should use a discerning judgment alongside the Scriptures. However, private interpretation is inventing something from one's own mind and then trying to bend the Scripture to fit it or, as a master over it, saying, "I want this to be understood this way." It is indicating a foreign meaning to the Scripture, which one has conceived and established within oneself without deriving it from the Word.

Objection 3:

Colossians 2:8 warns against being carried away as prey by philosophy and vain deceit. Verse 4 adds, "Lest any man should beguile you with enticing words." Drawing consequences is the work

of philosophy; therefore, one must beware of drawing consequences and presenting specious arguments.

Answer:

The apostle warns against the misuse, not the use, which takes place in all things. Philosophy, that is reasoning, is inherent to man, and he uses it in all his speech and actions. This reasoning is improved through practice. The desire for wisdom through reasoning is called philosophy, and it is not vain deceit in itself. Paul does not call philosophy vain deceit, but he shows that those clever in reasoning can bring forth such specious arguments that could easily beguile, deceive, or mislead the simple. One must guard against such people and their actions by listening not to reason but to the Word. This has no relation to trying to understand the Word through sound reasoning and seeking what is hidden in every place, that is, making conclusions from the Word.

Objection 4:

2 Corinthians 10:5 mentions overthrowing reasonings and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, capturing every thought to make it obedient to Christ. If one must overthrow reasonings and capture thoughts, then one must reject all the consequences that they draw from their reasonings and thoughts from the Word.

Answer:

(a) If people must cast off all reasonings and thoughts, they would have to divest themselves of humanity, and they should not accept anything that is not explicitly stated in the Scriptures because they cannot do so without reasoning and thought.

(b) The text explains itself because it speaks of reasonings and thoughts that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God; surely, these must be overthrown and captured. However, this does not apply to reasonings and thoughts through which one comes to a knowledge of God and His Word as a means of investigating what is hidden in the Word in every place, and made manifest to the conscience through a consequence.

XXIII. Question: Is the Scripture clear to understand? The Roman Catholics say that Scripture is so obscure that it cannot be understood except through the unwritten traditions and authoritative interpretations of the church. They claim that one must understand every passage in the way the Roman Church interprets it because she says that is the meaning.

Answer:

(a) Many matters are too high for human understanding, such as the way God exists, one in essence and three in persons; how God is eternal, infinite, without extension, good without quality, the union of the two natures in Christ, and the like. They are presented clearly; anyone can see at a glance that they are in the Word, but one cannot fully grasp these matters, so they are believed.

(b) Not everyone is capable of understanding the spiritual sense of Scripture, which is, however, clearly presented. It is like the sun, which, though a luminous light, cannot be seen by a blind person, and a nearly blind person only perceives a dim light, unable to discern objects. Those with spiritual enlightenment can see the glory and loveliness in Divine truths. The graced ones first receive the illumination of the eyes of understanding through reading or hearing, and these are different in degrees. There are children, young people, and adults. The least among them knows the sense of Christ

and, reading the Word attentively, understands everything necessary for salvation. They see the truth in the Word, know it, and believe it because it is stated in the Word. Others progress further and see more things, understanding the context better. Some receive even greater light, but they remain learners, and their light cannot be compared to the knowledge of angels.

(c) It should be noted that many passages of Scripture, taken by themselves, can be understood clearly and well for godliness and salvation without perceiving the context. Many passages do not appear immediately but require closer examination. Also, the context in many places is not immediately obvious, not because it is unclear, inappropriate, or unsuitable in itself, but because the investigator is in darkness.

(d) The knowledge of the Holy Scriptures is still imperfect in the best, and in many, it is very small, requiring instruction. This is not due to a lack of clarity in the Word but so that they may be able to see the light. This instruction does not involve making known the judgment of the church or traditions for one to rely on them but by presenting and showing things in various ways so that the one being instructed may see that the Scripture says this or that, and the nature of the matter.

So, in response to the question of whether the Scripture is clear to understand, we answer, yes. Even a born-again believer, in the lowest degree of understanding, who attentively reads the Scripture, can comprehend it to the extent necessary for their salvation. The Scripture is not only clear in itself, expressing things with utmost precision and clarity, but it is also understandable to a converted soul, one who possesses enlightened eyes of understanding. This is evident:

Evidence XXIV.

1. From explicit declarations of God: Psalm 19:9. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. Psalm 119:105. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. 2 Peter 1:2. A light shining in a dark place.
2. God has given His Word to enlighten, guide, and comfort His own, as is evident from Psalm 19:9... enlightening the eyes, Romans 15:4: For our instruction... comfort of the Scriptures, 2 Timothy 3:15, 16. And how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation... profitable for teaching. Psalm 119:9. How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. This purpose of the Scriptures could not be achieved unless the Scriptures were clear to understand.
3. It is an imperfection in a writer if he does not write in an understandable manner; the clearer and more explicit he presents things, allowing one to see into the core of the subject, the more learned he is considered. This shows that he comprehends the subject thoroughly. Therefore, since God is the Father of lights, an unapproachable Light, and He has given the Scriptures to reveal mysteries to people, it is certain that the Holy Scripture incomparably surpasses all other writings in clarity and comprehensibility and is most suitable for teaching people.
4. Even though the worldly-wise, though blind in the matters themselves, may have to admit that many passages of Holy Scripture, in terms of style and manner of presentation, can be understood by people with some understanding without any instruction, if they could understand the matters themselves. For example: There is one God, and one Mediator of God. Christ died for sin. Christ rose from the dead. Blessed are those who

trust in Him. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. There will be a resurrection of the dead. What obscurity is there in these expressions? However, a natural man cannot spiritually understand the matters themselves because he lacks spiritual eyesight. But the converted have enlightened eyes of understanding (Ephesians 1:18); they have the anointing of the Holy Spirit, who teaches them all things (1 John 2:27). They are taught by God (Isaiah 54:13), so the Scripture is clear and understandable to them.

XXV. Objection 1.

2 Peter 3:16. Speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. That such is the case, and that it leads to such consequences, is not clear but rather obscure to understand.

Answer.

(a) The apostle speaks of some things, not all things, in the letters of Paul, which he wrote with divine wisdom.

(b) He speaks of matters, not of the style and manner of presentation. The matters were profound mysteries, yet presented with utmost clarity and lucidity.

(c) He speaks of the unlearned and unstable, not of unlearned and natural matters. These are natural people who do not have the Spirit, who have not been taught by God, and who lack spiritually enlightened understanding. He speaks of unstable people who may come to the church, know something of divine truths but lack a spiritual foundation, and therefore, they are fickle, carried away by

every wind of doctrine. These individuals not only twist the profound matters of Paul that they cannot understand but also distort the other Scriptures to their own destruction. Jude 1:10. But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand naturally. Thus, the text does not say that the Scripture is obscure in matters necessary for salvation, and that it is so for the regenerated, which is the point of contention.

Objection 2.

Acts 8:30, 31. And Philip ran up to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" Because the Scripture cannot be understood without guidance, it is not clear to understand. Answer. (a) It is far from excluding guidance; those who are still unconverted need guidance because they lack knowledge of spiritual matters, no matter how clearly they are presented. We are not talking about what Scripture is for the unconverted. A blind person cannot read and gain understanding of what is in a book through reading. For anyone who is beginning to have spiritual insight and has progressed to some extent, at each level (for no one here has reached perfection), guidance is a means to progress further and further. However, the necessity of guidance does not imply obscurity in Scripture but rather the depth of its content and the unpreparedness of the individual. (b) Guidance is not intended to make Scripture clearer but to equip individuals to see the mysteries within Scripture.

Objection 3.

1 Corinthians 13:12. For now we see in a mirror dimly. Answer. This text does not refer to Holy Scripture but to believers, explaining that

the knowledge they have in this world is like a dim reflection compared to the knowledge they will have in heaven. So, it does not pertain to the question of whether the godly can understand the Holy Scripture for their comfort, guidance, faith, and salvation, or whether the Scripture is so obscure that they cannot understand it at all.

Objection 4.

The Word cannot be understood except by the illumination of God's Spirit; therefore, it is obscure to understand. See: Luke 24:32. Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures? Psalm 119:18. Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. Answer. (a) We readily admit that one must be enlightened by God's Spirit if they are to understand Scripture in its spiritual sense. Without that, people cannot understand spiritual matters; they appear as foolishness to them. (b) The texts themselves indicate that the issue is not with the clarity of Scripture but with the human understanding, which the Holy Spirit must enable to comprehend the spiritual matters presented in Scripture.

No visible and infallible judge of differences exists, not even the pope.

XXVI. Question: Whether on earth there is a supreme and infallible judge of disputes over the Holy Scripture who pronounces a verdict to which everyone must submit by God's command? And who this judge is: whether it is the church, or a church assembly, or the pope of Rome? The Roman Catholics claim that God has appointed such a judge, and that the judge is the pope of Rome. Even when they sometimes speak of churches and church assemblies, it ultimately comes down to the pope because they place him at the head of the church and above the Church assemblies. Most of them even

consider him infallible when he makes a pronouncement from his seat. Answer: We say:

(a) that many errors in doctrine arise due to the corruption of human understanding, some of greater and some of lesser significance. 1 Corinthians 11:19. For there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.

(b) That every individual member, whether a person in authority as a member or an ordinary person, possesses the capacity for independent judgment to understand the Scriptures.

(c) And that the overseers of the church, representing the church, as ministers of Christ, have a ministerial judgment over disputes to decide them according to the rule of God's Word, insofar as they pertain to outward matters, in order to maintain peace and the unity of faith. They also have the authority to remove those who will not renounce their errors from among them, according to Romans 16:17. However, persuading someone's conscience is not the judgment of the church. No one's faith should be based on their judgment; rather, it is solely the Holy Spirit speaking in and through the Word, which is the only foundation of faith.

(d) Thus, we deny that there is an infallible judge on earth whose verdict everyone must believe in, and even more strongly, we deny that it is the Roman church, church assembly, or pope. Because:

Proof 1: Not a single letter in the Bible. XXVII. 1. Not a single dot or iota in the Bible mentions the existence of such visible, supreme, infallible judges over disputes and the meaning of the Holy Scriptures; much less that Roman church assemblies or the pope would be such judges. Let a single passage be produced. If such a privilege of such great significance were to exist, on which the entire

truth would depend, Paul would have surely mentioned it in his letter to the Romans. The apostle Peter would have done something resembling such a privilege and made a declaration that the pope of Rome would succeed him after his death, having the power to make infallible pronouncements on disputes. But not a word does he speak of this. In fact, the Scripture shows that Peter was rebuked by Paul, as seen in Galatians 2:11. Even in the first church assembly held in Jerusalem in Acts 15:13, Peter was not the chairman; instead, James' judgment was followed. Therefore, all the pope does is an usurpation: he claims power that is not given to him and that he cannot prove.

Proof 2: The pope is not infallible. The pope is not infallible, neither in doctrine nor in life. Some have been extraordinarily wicked—adulterers, sorcerers, heretics, atheists, as even the papal writers themselves testify. How can such infallible judges of disputes related to doctrine be individuals like these? The Lord's secrets are revealed to those who fear Him, as stated in Psalm 25:14. Moreover, today he commands contrary to Scripture. He commands abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving. He forbids marriage, against 1 Timothy 4:3. He allows incestuous marriages that God has prohibited. He instructs the invocation of a piece of bread as God. He institutes religious worship of angels, deceased saints, and images, all in direct contradiction to the Word. Can such a person be an infallible judge? It is abhorrent.

Proof 3: Not acknowledged by many Catholics. Even the Roman Catholics themselves do not recognize him as an infallible judge. As an example, we will present some brief excerpts from the judgment rendered by the Parliament Court, the Great Chamber and the Tournelle, regarding the Pope's Bull dated January 23, 1688, in the Netherlands.

..."In this realm, the new views on the infallibility of the pope are spreading. Indeed, the stubbornness of the pope is the cause. Who could imagine that the pope, portrayed to us as an example of holiness and virtue, would cling so tenaciously to his views and be so jealous of the shadow of a vain authority? The pope's commands, unjust as they may be, only serve to reveal the origins of his unjust possessions. The pope is jealous of distinguishing his papacy with high-sounding novelties. He even adds empty threats of excommunication, which are incapable of striking fear even in the most timorous souls and the most scrupulous consciences. It is an unbearable abuse that in a purely worldly matter, the pope employs spiritual weapons to give credibility to such a scandalous novelty. When Pope Gregory IV threatened to excommunicate the French bishops, they bravely replied that they would not obey the pope's will and that if he came with the intention of excommunicating them, he would leave excommunicated himself. *Si Excommunicaturus veniret, Excommunicatus abiret*. Can anything be more irrational and unjust, not to mention monstrous, than the promulgation of this edict? The whole world is convinced that it is not the zeal for the house of God, but resentment and displeasure that led to the proclamation of this edict. In this case, there is nothing to fear from the Vatican's thunderbolt. It would be very beneficial if all ecclesiastical matters in the realm were dealt with without having recourse to Rome. The pope is completely under the authority of church assemblies, which have the right to correct him and reform his pronouncements. Does this conform to the care and gentleness of the apostles in guiding the church? It's a strange matter that the pope, even after sitting on St. Peter's chair, did not cease to negotiate with the disciples of Jansenius, whose teachings had been condemned by his predecessors. He showered them with favors, spoke well of them, etc." So much for how the Roman Catholics

esteem their pope; how far they are from recognizing him as infallible!

Proof 4: He does not end disputes among his subjects. It is claimed that a visible, infallible judge of disputes must exist to bring an end to all disputes. However, this end is not achieved by the pope, who presents himself as an infallible judge. Not all Protestants recognize him. If he pronounces anathema (excommunication) upon them, they reciprocate with anathema upon him. How can he, being a party himself, be a judge? Has the difference really ended between the conflicting parties, the Dominicans and the Jesuits, between the Jesuits and the Jansenists, the Quietists and the Operatists? These sects remain alive within the papacy. All of these instances show that the pope is not an infallible judge of disputes and cannot be one.

Proof 5: No king will tolerate this. The Word teaches us that in matters of religion, doctrine, and life, we should not look to any human authority but to the Word itself as an infallible rule and at the same time as the judge of disputes, being its own interpreter. This is because it is the Word of the only sovereign Judge of heaven and earth, and of the supreme Wisdom that has existed from eternity. No earthly sovereign will tolerate their subjects, whether pretended or genuine, presuming to be infallible interpreters of their commands and imposing their interpretations on their subjects, while the sovereign still lives. Much less will the living God tolerate this. He speaks clearly and plainly, and He does not withhold His Holy Spirit for the enlightenment of those who pray for it. Those who refuse to submit to God will be even less subject to the pronouncements of a man who opposes the Word of God. Those who submit to God alone will reject with abhorrence the erroneous pronouncements of a pope.

Proof 6: God Himself speaking in the Word is the only Judge. God desires that everyone should learn from and live by His Word. This is evident from:

- Isaiah 8:20: "To the law and to the testimony."
- John 5:39: "Search the Scriptures."
- Matthew 22:29: "You err, not knowing the Scriptures."
- Luke 16:29: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."

Therefore, even though the Lord Jesus Himself is the Lord, He affirmed His teachings from the Scriptures, as is consistently seen in the Gospels. The apostles did the same in their preaching in the Acts of the Apostles and in their letters. For instance, Peter commends not his infallibility but the prophetic word in 2 Peter 1:19. Luke praises the Bereans for examining the Word and searching whether the things spoken by Paul were so in Acts 17:11. Not a single word about an infallible judge is found in the Bible. Instead, the Scriptures themselves are set as the judge, and we are called to listen to their verdict as the oracles of God. Therefore, we firmly conclude that neither the true church, let alone the Roman church, church assemblies, or the pope—on whom they rely—serve as judges in matters of doctrine or life.

Proof 7: From Scripture. Consider these texts that explicitly establish the Word itself as the judge:

- John 12:48: "...The word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day."
- John 5:45: "Moses, on whom you have set your hope."
- 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is profitable for teaching, for reproof."

- Hebrews 4:12: "The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword."

Therefore, the Word itself judges the disputes arising from the Word, for the sovereign living God speaks, has spoken, and continues to speak. We must regard the Word as if it were spoken to us audibly by God Himself from heaven.

XXVIII. Objection 1:

In the Old Testament, Moses, the high priest, the prophets, and all the priests were judges of disputes concerning doctrine; thus, in the New Testament, the pope, cardinals, bishops, and church assemblies serve as judges. Malachi 2:7 is cited: "For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." Response: (a) Moses and the prophets received extraordinary revelations from God to make them known and to write them down. Their role doesn't lead to ordinary teachers, whether from the Old or New Testament. (b) None of them, let alone the ordinary, came to an ultimate judgment concerning what was written. They exercised a ministerial and serviceable judgment to apply the truths in the Word to particular individuals and situations, in which they were not infallible. This remains true today.

Objection 2:

There must necessarily be a visible, infallible judge of disputes, or else truth in the church and the church in the truth cannot exist, and disputes will never end. Response:

(a) The truth always remains in the Word, and the Word remains in the church.

(b) The church is preserved in the truth, and the truth in the church, through the ministerial judgment of overseers according to the Word, applying it to errors and erring individuals for instruction. If they persist in error, they are excluded from the fellowship of the church. An ultimate and infallible judgment is not required for this.

(c) Disputes will never cease; heresies will always exist. Even if there were an infallible judge on earth, heresies would not disappear. Disputes persist within the papacy, despite the pope and church assembly being set as infallible judges.

Objection 3:

The Word does not hear the opposing parties and their arguments, so it cannot be the judge of disputes. Therefore, another judge is required. Response: (a) This may apply to human writings and someone who doesn't express a matter sufficiently or clearly. However, it doesn't apply to the perfect law of the sovereign, all-knowing, all-wise, and ever-living God. He joins His Spirit with the Word, clearly and distinctly conveying all truths, and refuting all errors against it. The Holy Spirit foresees all errors that may arise. Those without eyes and ears cannot hear the verdict of either a visible, speaking judge or God in His Word. Regardless of spiritual conditions, God remains the Judge, clearly stating the truth in His Word and contradicting errors.

Objection 4:

The dispute is about the Word itself, whether it has this or that meaning. Thus, the Scripture itself cannot make the judgment, requiring an infallible judge. Response: When there is a dispute over the laws of an earthly sovereign, is anyone other than the sovereign himself authorized to declare the meaning of those laws? Does this

authority belong to one of his subjects while the sovereign is alive, or does it belong to the sovereign alone? Everyone knows that only the sovereign has this authority. Now, God is alive; God speaks clearly in His Word in various ways, aspects, and places, so that if someone doesn't understand it in one place, they may see it in another. Comparing Scripture with Scripture, one will find that God explains His own words. Therefore, Holy Scripture, or the Holy Spirit speaking in the Word, is the Judge, rendering judgment on disputes that arise among people. To appoint another infallible judge is to exalt oneself above God and His Word, a course God will not tolerate.

Objection 5:

The church must be heard; otherwise, the one not listening must be expelled (Matthew 18:17). Therefore, the church has an infallible judgment over disputes. Response: This conclusion does not follow. Overseers exercise a ministerial and applicative judgment in specific cases, only according to the Word. Thus, they should be heard, and anyone who refuses to submit to the Word presented by the overseers should be expelled.

XXIX. Question: Is reason not the interpreter of Holy Scripture? Answer: The Socinians and those who agree with them claim that the entire Word of God, every text, must be examined in light of reason. They assert that nothing should be accepted as truth unless reason deems it so. If Scripture appears to conflict with reason, it should be interpreted in a way that aligns with reason. If Scripture contradicts reason, one should follow reason as an infallible principle rather than Scripture.

We maintain that understanding and reason are absolutely necessary to comprehend Scripture and arrive at faith. However, they serve as

means by which we discern what God says in His Word, which then produces faith and on which faith rests. Reason should not be the foundation, rule, touchstone, or determiner of whether what God reveals in His Word is true. We believe in these truths because God declares them. Reason must submit to the Word, not vice versa. Reason is Hagar, not Sarah; the servant, not the master. This is evident:

Proof 1: Natural reason is blind to spiritual matters. Consider the state of the human intellect. Due to sin, it is not only weakened in regard to natural matters, comprehending few things and discerning even fewer, but it is utterly blind concerning spiritual matters.

- Ephesians 4:18: "They are darkened in their understanding."
- Ephesians 5:8: "For at one time you were darkness."
- 1 Corinthians 2:14: "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned." Such is humanity's condition in nature. An ignorant and conceited person cannot handle Scripture better than a donkey can play a lyre. What they do not understand, they will blaspheme, and what they naturally know as an irrational animal, they will corrupt (Romans 1:22). Who, then, would set a darkened intellect as a rule and judge over the profound mysteries that the all-wise God has been pleased to reveal? Every light has its radius or limit, whether in a candle, torch, or the sun. The same holds true for human vision: sharp eyesight discerns things at a distance, whereas nearsightedness sees nothing. The same applies to human knowledge. Can an untrained mind judge matters of physics, metaphysics, geometry, or astronomy? The same principle applies to human intellect and reason: they are limited and inadequate to grasp

the profound mysteries of the Divine Word, making them unfit to judge.

Proof 2: Revealed mysteries are far beyond reason's reach. Revealed mysteries are beyond the scope of reason. Reason cannot even approach them. How, then, can reason be the judge and standard by which they are measured?

- Job 11:7: "Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty?"
- Psalm 139:6: "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it."
- Job 26:14: "Behold, these are but the outskirts of his ways, and how small a whisper do we hear of him! But the thunder of his power, who can understand?" To be a judge over Scripture's meaning and to determine what should be accepted as truth or not, one would need to understand everything perfectly. However, the human intellect and reason cannot fathom the profound mysteries of God. Therefore, reason cannot be a judge in this matter. Everything that reason cannot comprehend would have to be rejected, including God's eternity, His perfections, omnipresence, infinity, and so on. One would have to reject the Holy Trinity, so clearly revealed in God's Word, as well as the union of the two natures in Christ, even the creation of the world itself. Reason cannot comprehend how God created everything from nothing, yet we believe it by faith. What, then, would we not have to reject?

Proof 3: Human judgments are conflicting. What one person believes is clear and distinct through reason, another person will argue the opposite through reason. What one person believed to be true before, they may later reject as false based on reason. This creates

uncertainty, and one who frequently contradicts themselves is not credible. Human reason often errs, so it cannot be the judge, rule, or interpreter of Holy Scripture.

Proof 4: The mysteries of the Word are accepted as certain by faith. Faith and reason are entirely different grounds for establishing a matter. When something is established by reason, faith has no role, and when something is accepted by faith, reason is excluded. Reason can only acknowledge that something is reported by another and that it is not impossible for it to be as reported. But whether it is so is determined by faith alone. The divine mysteries in the Word must be accepted as certain by faith because the true God, who cannot lie, has said so (Acts 26:27; Hebrews 11:1; John 6:27). Reason comes into play here only to understand that it is stated in God's Word. Once this is known, there can be no doubt or suspicion that it may not be true, which would cast doubt on God's truthfulness. The matter is accepted as infallible through faith. Even if the subject is too high for reason to judge its truth, it is not contrary to reason. Reason should remain silent, saying, "I cannot comprehend this," while faith alone declares, "It is truth."

Proof 5: The Spirit testifies that the Word is true. God's Spirit reveals the mysteries of the Word to the heart, testifies that the Word is true, and grants faith. Therefore, reason, as a judge and arbiter of whether something mentioned in the Word should be believed, is excluded. Consider the following:

- Matthew 16:17: "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you (that is, reason has not taught you), but my Father who is in heaven."
- Luke 24:45: "Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures."

- 2 Corinthians 4:6: "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."
- Psalm 119:18: "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law."
- 1 John 5:6: "It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth." As for reason, the Scripture states that it should be taken captive (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Proof 6: Absurdities.

If reason were the judge of Scripture and had to decide what to believe from the Word, then: (a) God would be subject to human judgment, and humans would call God to account for His words. (b) All religion would be merely natural and not spiritual or faith-based. (c) The greatest philosophers and the most intelligent would be the most enlightened theologians, directly contradicting the words of Christ in Matthew 11:25: "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children." These absurdities immediately follow from such assertions. Just as they are absurd, so is this one.

XXX. Objection 1:

Religion is a reasonable religion (Romans 12:1). Therefore, reason must judge every aspect of religion and every passage of Holy Scripture in terms of how it should be understood. Answer: In the OLD TESTAMENT, irrational animals were offered as examples, which, separated from their typological significance, could not be pleasing to God in themselves. However, God, being a Spirit, requires worship in spirit and truth, with understanding and rationality. Reason comes into play here as a means to understand what God has

revealed and whether the matter, as revealed by God, is fully comprehended or if it surpasses human understanding. Humans have enough to believe. This does not in the least imply that reason is the judge of every doctrine and passage of Scripture. Reason is a servant, not a mistress.

Objection 2:

Many doctrines are drawn from natural things, as the Lord Jesus often does in parables. Therefore, reason, which judges over natural things, should also judge over the doctrines contained in Scripture. Answer: It is false to claim that any doctrine of faith is drawn from nature. Natural things are only introduced to explain the matters of faith and to impress them more deeply upon the heart. Also, God knows natural things best.

Objection 3:

Many doctrines are not explicitly presented in Scripture but are deduced from it by inference. Reason alone judges whether the inference is correct or not. Therefore, reason is the judge of what to believe or not to believe. Answer: The doctrines deduced correctly from a Scripture passage are inherent in that very passage, which one believes to be true because God has said it. In such a case, reason has no place, but reason is the means by which one sees that such a matter lies in such a text and is demonstrated by a valid inference from that text. Reason judges whether the inference is drawn correctly, but it does not judge whether the matter deduced from a text is true or not.

Objection 4:

Scripture establishes certain matters that reason judges to be the opposite, and it knows that they are not so. Therefore, reason must judge what is in accordance with or against the truth and accordingly what to believe or not to believe. Answer: It is untrue that Scripture states something that reason teaches to be the opposite. What God says in Scripture about natural things is true and infallible by God's testimony. God does not speak according to people's erroneous beliefs.

XXXI. Question: Does God speak in Holy Scripture according to the erroneous beliefs of people? Some say yes, but we emphatically say no. It is the "proton qeudon," the first lie, to maintain that the earth revolves and the sun stands still. That heathens, who do not know God and His Word, or atheists who reject both, might speak thus is not so surprising. However, those who know God and acknowledge the divine authority of Holy Scripture should never utter such words, lest they be heard with horror by those who love God. Is not God the God of truth? Is He not truthful? Is He a man who would lie? Is He not the God who cannot lie? Would the holy and truthful God lie? And is it not a lie when God says something contrary to the truth, against His better knowledge, and speaks as if He were like the lying and erring people, and strengthens them in their error by saying the same thing? Is not the Holy Spirit the Spirit of truth who guides us into all truth? All Scripture is God-breathed. Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. The Word of God is the truth. Far be it from the Almighty to do wrong. Where does God speak in Holy Scripture according to the erroneous beliefs of people? Where is even a semblance of it?

Objection 1:

The Holy Scripture states in many places that the earth is still, motionless, and that the sun revolves around it because it appears so to people, and they are in this error. However, it is certain that the world revolves, and the sun is still and motionless, or that both the earth and the sun revolve in a certain orbit. Answer: Who cares if philosophers and astronomers debate this? But mixing the Word of God with it, and casting suspicion on God and His Word, that must not be tolerated. It is certain that God's Word uses many eloquent expressions. It is known that the good God accommodates Himself to the weak and limited understanding of humanity and leads through visible and natural things to the spiritual. But to suggest that God would speak untruths in His Word is nothing short of horrifying. Who, if they love God, would not oppose that? It is true that God's Word in many places says that the sun revolves, creating day and night with its motion, and that the world remains still and motionless. God does not say otherwise anywhere, as we will demonstrate in Chapter 8. And because God says so, it is the truth, to be embraced as such. Is not God the Creator and Sustainer, the Ruler of all things? Does He not know His own work better than a person with a small and limited understanding? Must we not submit our judgment to God's words? Or should we twist and bend the clear expressions of God to fit our misguided understanding? Everything that God says, even about natural things, is the truth. God says that the world is still and motionless, and that the sun revolves. Therefore, this is a firm and undeniable truth.

Objection 2:

Genesis 1:16 says, "God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night." Here, the sun and the moon are called the two great lights, even though some stars are much larger. Therefore, God is speaking according to the

erroneous beliefs of people who, based on outward appearances, consider the sun and moon to be the greatest lights. Answer:

1. God is not making a comparison here but speaking of the sun and moon in and of themselves. He simply states that the sun is a greater light than the moon. God does not call them the greatest lights but great lights. So where is the error or misrepresentation in this text?
2. God is not speaking of physical bodies here and does not say that the sun and moon are larger bodies than some stars; He is referring to lights. Are not the sun and moon greater lights, and indeed (although the text does not state it) the greatest lights? Which stars emit greater light? None. To turn physical bodies into lights and then draw a false conclusion from it is to go astray oneself and commit a palpable error. By such reasoning, what could one not twist?

Objection 3:

Joshua 10:12, 13 says, "Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and you, moon, in the Valley of Aijalon!" And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped. However, the sun was not at Gibeon, and the moon was not in the Valley of Aijalon; it only appeared so, and it is said this way based on people's erroneous beliefs. The same applies to the following: the sun and moon standing still. Answer: Were the people then so naive that they thought the sun and moon were on Earth? Far from it. There is no erroneous belief or misrepresentation here. It signifies that the sun was positioned over Gibeon and the moon over Aijalon at that time, and in those positions, they stood still. A miracle occurred here. This miracle did not involve the Earth coming to a stop in its rotation but rather the sun and moon stopping in their courses, which clearly

demonstrates the orbits of the sun and moon. There is no trace of error or misrepresentation here.

Objection 4:

Acts 27:27 says, "About midnight the sailors suspected they were approaching land." This was an erroneous belief; the land was not approaching them, but the ship was approaching the land. Answer: Those must have been very foolish sailors if they believed that the ship was stationary and the land was drifting towards them. No, they were not that foolish. It is a common expression used to indicate that they were getting closer to land. People still use such expressions daily. It is not an erroneous belief or misrepresentation. It remains certain that God's Word does not speak according to people's erroneous beliefs.

IV. The Purpose is to be an Unchanging Standard of Doctrine and Life.

XXXII. Thus far, we have discussed the cause, substance, and form of Holy Scripture. Now, the fourth aspect follows, which is its purpose. The purpose of Scripture is to be a firm and unchanging standard of doctrine and life, leading humanity to salvation.

- John 20:31: "But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."
- Romans 15:4: "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."
- Psalm 119:9: "How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word." Just as in all things, the glorification of God is the highest and ultimate purpose, so it is

with the Word of God. This applies both to the Word of God itself, in which the wonderful goodness, unfathomable wisdom, unchanging truth, and almighty power of God are revealed, and to its effects, such as conversion, comfort, joy, marvelous enlightenment, and salvation, which the elect obtain through the Word.

- Psalm 147:1, 19: "Praise the Lord. . . . He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and rules to Israel."
- Psalm 119:164: "Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous rules."

V. The Object: The Word is Given to the Church.

XXXIII. The object to which the Word is given is the church.

- Psalm 147:20: "He has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know his rules."
- Romans 3:2: "Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God."
- Romans 9:4: "They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises."
- 1 Timothy 3:15: "if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth."

Question: Should the Word of God be read by everyone? Since the Word is given to the church, and thus to every member of the church, it should be read by everyone. The Roman Catholics exert all their efforts to obscure and take the Scriptures out of the hands of the people because their errors are so clearly exposed therein. They seek to make people dependent solely on the pope, his cardinals, church councils, bishops, and popes. Indeed, in the Council of Trent, they

explicitly prohibited the reading of the Bible. On the contrary, we consider this a terrible theft from the church and a way to close the path to heaven. We say that every person, whether educated or not, may and should read the Word of God. This is evident for the following reasons:

1. Reading the Scripture is nowhere prohibited, so who would dare to forbid it? The church never forbade it. The Council of Trent was the first to introduce this abomination, but it was not a truly orthodox council; it was an antichristian council.
 2. From the time of Moses to Christ, and from the time of Christ to the present day, every member of the church has always read it. Some were so abundant in it that they could recite entire letters from memory.
 3. God explicitly commanded ordinary people to read it. Deuteronomy 6:6-9: "And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." See how common they were supposed to make the Scriptures.
- John 5:39: "You search the Scriptures."
 - Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly."
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:27: "I put you under oath to have this letter read to all the brothers."
 - 2 Peter 1:19: "And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention."

Is it not terrible to forbid God's commandment?

4. Those who read the Word are praised, and a blessing is pronounced upon them.

- Psalm 1:1-2: "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night."
- Acts 17:11: "Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so."
- Revelation 1:3: "Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it."

5. The nature and purpose of the Scriptures are such that they must be read by everyone.

(a) It is God's Testament; now, a testament may and should be read by the heir.

(b) They are letters with inscriptions to everyone in the church; look at the beginning of each letter; now, a letter may and should be read by the one to whom it is written.

(c) The Word is the sword with which every believer must defend against spiritual enemies (Ephesians 6:17). Will you take away the spiritual warrior's weapons?

(d) It is the means of conversion, the seed of regeneration (1 Peter 1:23), the means of enlightenment (Psalm 19:9), of

teaching, consolation, growth (Romans 15:3; 1 Peter 2:2).

(e) It is written so that everyone may read it (Habakkuk 2:2).
"Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it."

From all of this, it is undeniable that each individual may and must read the Word of God.

XXXIV. Objection 1.

Matthew 7:6 says, "Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs," suggesting that we should not give the holy Word of God to everyone to read. Answer: (a) Then one could conclude that we should not preach to the unconverted. (b) This passage speaks not of reading Scripture but of teaching, admonishing, and rebuking, and that to those who would become more wicked and harm the speaker, but not of believers or others who would gladly listen.

Objection 2.

It is argued that many errors arise from common people reading the Holy Scripture, to the detriment of the readers themselves, who twist the Scriptures to their own destruction, as well as to the detriment of others who are led astray. Therefore, it is more beneficial to withhold the Holy Scripture from them. Answer: The reading of Scripture by everyone reveals the errors of the papacy and other false spirits, but it does not originate from them. Errors typically stem from misguided scholars. And though some may misuse Scripture due to their corrupt understanding, it does not negate its use. Without the Word of God, one is bound to go astray.

Objection 3.

If everyone were allowed to read the Word of God, preaching would be in vain; thus, it is necessary not to allow it. Answer: Reading and hearing can coexist, as seen in Revelation 1:3 and Acts 17:11. Preaching instructs, motivates, converts, and comforts every believer, just as reading does, and reading accomplishes the same as hearing. It is the same Word received in two different ways; reading and hearing are complementary, not contradictory.

Objection 4.

We do not absolutely prohibit reading Scripture to everyone; we grant permission to many, those whom we trust will not misuse it. Answer: This directly contradicts the Council of Trent. It is an attempt to mitigate the reproach against those who live near Protestants. It is not within the power of the pope or any priest to grant the privilege of reading the Bible. It is a divine gift bestowed upon the privileged, for which the pope or priest is not to be thanked. Withholding it is a theft from the church and a murder of souls.

May and must be translated into other languages.

XXXV. Because the Scriptures have been given to the church and to each of its members, and must be read by everyone, and the church in the New Testament has spread throughout the entire world among various peoples and languages (Revelation 5:9), it is necessary that the Holy Scriptures be translated into various languages so that everyone may read the Word in their own language, just as they hear it preached, as the apostles did (Acts 2:8). To this end, the Bible has been translated into many languages.

Three hundred years before the birth of Christ, the Old Testament was translated from Hebrew into Greek by seventy-two men who were proficient in both languages, under the direction and funding of Ptolemy Philadelphus, the king of Egypt.

During the time of the apostles, the Old Testament was partially translated into Chaldean by Jonathan, partially by Onkelos, and partially by uncertain translators.

Later, it was translated into the Syriac language. Subsequently, the entire Bible was translated into Latin by various individuals, as Latin was then the most common language. Among these translations, one is considered standard by the papacy. Later, it was translated into nearly as many languages as there are nations in the Church.

However, not all translations were made directly from the original Hebrew and Greek languages in which the holy men, driven by the Spirit of God, wrote. Some were translated from Greek or Latin versions. There are several Dutch translations referred to as the old translations.

The Dutch translation is the best. However, according to the decision of the National Synod held in Dordrecht in 1618 and 1619, the entire Bible was faithfully translated into Dutch from the original Hebrew and Greek texts, at the command and expense of the High and Mighty Lords, the States-General of the United Netherlands, by several learned men chosen for this task. To ensure its accuracy, a larger number of scholars were sent to collectively examine the translation made by the first selectee, from beginning to end. This makes our Dutch translation far surpass all other translations, whether old or newly done. It so faithfully and accurately expresses the original texts that all scholars, both friend and foe, are amazed. Those who dare to criticize it demonstrate their lack of thorough

knowledge of the original languages. If a word could be understood in another sense, they have noted it in the margins. Thanks be to the Lord for this invaluable gift!

No translation is authentic, but all must be tested against the original languages.

XXXVI. However perfect a translation may be, it is not authentic or infallible. It may have errors in one word or another, and therefore, every translation must be tested against the original text if there is any disagreement regarding the translation. A faithful translation presents all the things found in the original languages, but since it is another language, the sound of the words is also different. The original texts are directly inspired by God and, with respect to both things and words, are from God. Translations contain the things inspired by God but not the words. Even an unlearned person who cannot test translations against the original languages can still be assured of the truth of the things through the agreement of faith and the coherence of the content. This is accompanied by the testimony of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness that the Spirit speaking in the Word is the truth; the power of the Word on their own heart and the hearts of others, and the consensus of all scholars and the godly. Even the enemies of true religion who understand both languages agree in this faithful translation, affirming that the things are truly and accurately translated. And if one has a different understanding of a word, they can be persuaded by the original language.

So also the Greek and Latin translations.

XXXVII. Regarding the Greek translation of the Old Testament by the seventy-two translators and the Latin translation called the Vulgate, the question arises: Do they have the same authority as the original texts? Are they as credible in themselves and infallible with

respect to the words as the texts written by the prophets, evangelists, and apostles, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit? This is asserted by the Roman Catholics, but we deny it, and it is evident:

1. Because these two translations were not done through an infallible inspiration of the Holy Spirit, any more than any other translations. They were carried out by fallible human beings, even though they did their best not to make errors. Therefore, one cannot equate them, or any other translations, with the original texts in terms of respect and infallibility.
2. Because it is clear to all scholars, including learned Roman Catholics, that both of these translations contain glaring mistakes. It is evident that the LXX (Septuagint) made errors in various places because they used a Hebrew Bible without vowel points, while God had it written with vowel points. This is akin to writing a letter without vowels; one might still get the main idea but could easily make mistakes in the details. It is also clear that the common Latin translation of the Old Testament was translated from Greek and not from Hebrew. In both translations, there are significant errors that scholars under the papacy acknowledge. This is why, by order of the pope, the common Latin translation was partially improved. For these reasons, many of them do not recognize any translation as authentic.

XXXVIII. Objection 1.

Christ and the apostles, when they quoted texts from the Old Testament, often recounted the words of the LXX (Septuagint); therefore, did they not acknowledge or make it authentic?

Answer.

Christ and the apostles aimed at the meaning of a text, not the exact words. They did not always use that translation but sometimes the Hebrew text itself. They used the Greek translation because it was more accessible to the people at that time, as Greek was more widespread than Hebrew. Therefore, we cannot draw an equal status with the original text from their quoting a text from the LXX translators.

Objection 2.

The Hebrew church had an authentic Bible in its language, and the Greek church had one in its language, so the Latin church must also have an authentic one in its language.

Answer.

This argument is flawed on both sides. The Hebrew church had the Word as God had directly inspired it, both in terms of content and wording. They did not have the Scriptures of the New Testament. The Greek church did not have the Old Testament in its language authentically; they used a translation. However, they did have the New Testament authentically because it, too, was directly inspired by God. The Latin church, on the other hand, only has a translation and not an original text like the Hebrew and Greek. If this argument were valid, it would imply that every language group should have an authentic translation.

Objection 3.

These two translations are the oldest and have been in use for a very long time, so they must be considered at least authentic.

Answer.

A mistake does not become truth with the passage of time. The Latin translation is not as old as some other translations, and many older translations exist.

VI. The Utility and Necessity.

XXXIX. The last aspect to consider about the Word is its necessity and utility. The Word is necessary and beneficial not only for beginners and the simple-minded but also for the most perfect and spiritual individuals on Earth. It is a stream from which a lamb drinks and a sea in which an elephant can sink. Anyone who thinks they have outgrown the Bible is a fool; they neither understand the spirituality of the Word nor themselves. God could have gathered, preserved, and grown His church through His omnipotence without a written Word. However, it is the wisdom and goodness of our God to care for His church in a way that is the best and most steadfast. He makes His will known to her through a permanent scripture, now through printing, so that everyone may have it in their homes and draw guidance and sustenance from it daily. God has bound humanity to it, preventing them from straying when they venture outside. Thus, the Word is necessary and useful. This is evident in the following ways:

Proof 1. The Only Means of Faith and Conversion. It is the only God-ordained means to faith and conversion. Without the Word, no one comes to faith. Romans 10:14, 17: "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." Without the Word, no one is born again. James 1:18: "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth." 1 Peter 1:23: "Since you have been born again, not of

perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God."

Proof 2. The Means of Growth. The Word is the spiritual nourishment for believers. 1 Peter 2:2: "Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation." Due to the neglect of the Word by many, they remain in darkness, instability, are tossed to and fro by various doctrines, live in sadness, and have weak faith, estranged from God.

Proof 3. The Rule for Guiding Life. The Word is the only rule by which the disposition of the heart, thoughts, words, and actions should be governed. Galatians 6:16: "And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them." Isaiah 8:20: "To the teaching and to the testimony!" Psalm 119:6: "Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments." If one neglects the Word and sets their own understanding as their Bible, they will deceive themselves and become a source of concern for others. It will lead to a sinful life and great stumbling. Many, not making the Word their rule, will seek to enter but will not be able to (Luke 13:24).

Proof 4. The Basis of Comfort. The Word provides a solid comfort. Romans 15:4: "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." Psalm 119:92, 111: "If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart." The comfort that comes from the Word, whether during reading, hearing, prayer, or meditation, whether it arises directly from a Scripture passage or is brought to mind through the gentle prompting of a verse, is often deeper, more

foundational, more stable, and more potent than the comfort a soul receives without reference to the Word. However, one should be cautious about wanting an explicit Scripture reference at that moment, for that may easily dissipate the sweetness. It is good to read and hear the Bible frequently so that in times of need, we have a supply of verses, and these scriptural passages come to mind in meditation, even in dreams—something that often occurs, including verses whose location in the Bible one did not know.

Proof 5. Means of Sanctification. The Word is a special means of sanctification. John 17:17: "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth." The Word accomplishes this not only through continual exhortation, by which the believing soul is bent to obedience as if by the voice of God, but also because one is engaged in continual conversation with God when reading, hearing, meditating on, and setting it as a rule. This makes the soul more faithful and more firmly established in the truth. Faith begets love, and love leads to sanctification. Moreover, the soul is elevated to higher levels of spiritual understanding and is confined to fewer things, which it did not see before. Therefore, everyone who is slow in reading and sluggish in making the Word their own will, to a great extent, miss out on these beautiful fruits.

Proof 6. It is the Spiritual Armor. The Word is the spiritual sword with which one fights against the devil, heresies, and the flesh in all circumstances. Ephesians 6:17. Hebrews 4:12. "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." He who possesses this sword stands firm, protects himself, and conquers his enemies.

Proof 7. Means of Salvation. Indeed, to sum up, the Word of God is the only means by which one is saved. Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation." Ephesians 1:13: "The gospel of your salvation." James 1:21: "which is able to save your souls."

Therefore, those who desire salvation should consider and recognize the Word as necessary and useful and should have a deep love for the Word.

XL. Since the Word is as presented thus far, everyone is obliged to the following:

1. One must believe the Word. The Word, as described, must be acknowledged, valued, believed, and held in high esteem, without which the Word is not useful. Hebrews 4:2: "For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened." An unbelieving heart sometimes arises, and the devil incites doubt about whether the Word of God is genuinely inspired by God, which can make believers very sad and troublesome. However, they can feel that the power of the Word is working in their hearts in a way that no human writing can. When a human writing has some effect, it is only insofar as it reflects the Word and is derived from it. Believers clearly see the rest and comfort a believer draws from the Word, how powerful it is for the conversion of people, and that on earth, there is no purer, better, or more certain way to salvation. This should persuade everyone and lead their thoughts to obedience and suppress such rising doubts at the outset so that they do not further trouble the soul. For a more detailed discussion of this,

see below in the 2nd Part, Chapter 44: "Whether the Word of God is the truth."

2. Rejoice in it. One should wholeheartedly rejoice in this most precious gift from God, embrace it with great love, and be delighted every time one sees it or takes it in hand. Nearly the whole world is without the Word; the papacy withholds it from people and burns Bibles with those who have read them. But we have it, can hear it, and can read it. How our hearts should rejoice over this! Psalm 119:14, 97: "In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. Oh how I love your law!" Psalm 19:10: "More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb."
3. Thank God for it. One should thank and glorify the Lord, who has given it. Psalm 119:62: "At midnight I rise to praise you because of your righteous rules." Psalm 147:12, 19: "Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion! He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and rules to Israel."
4. Make use of it. Make use of the Word in prosperity, adversity, darkness, doubt, and in all your walks of life. For nothing can happen to you, and you have nothing to do where the Word will not provide you with comfort, peace, counsel, and guidance. Psalm 119:24, 30, 105, 111: "Your testimonies are ... my counselors. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I set your rules before me."
5. Purchase and keep it in your home. Buy this invaluable jewel and keep it in your home. Among the contemporary trends, I find this to be the best and commendable: many prominent

individuals have a large, beautiful Bible with a hymnbook in every room. If only they would use them more! It is one of the best acts of charity to provide the poor with Bibles and frequently inquire whether they read them daily. The poor who desire nothing should gather pennies to obtain a Bible. Those who cannot read should make every effort to learn, with the intention of reading the Word of God. A house without a Bible is like a ship without a rudder; a Christian without a Bible is like a soldier without a weapon.

In the early days of the Reformation in the Netherlands, it was a custom among some of the well-off to visit the poor with a Testament in their pocket and read to them (because most people could not read at that time), and then give them alms. This was also done by sailors when they returned from a voyage. In this way, they alleviated the lack of having a Bible or the inability to read, and they built each other up, paving the way for the Reformation. It would be very beneficial to continue this practice today, as many people lack the ability to speak effectively.

6. Reading Abundantly. Read, investigate, and contemplate the Word diligently and systematically. This should even be the duty of kings. Deuteronomy 17:19: "And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life." This is the duty of scholars. 1 Timothy 4:13: "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture." This is the privilege and task of the humble and everyone. John 5:39: "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life." Matthew 12:3: "Have you not read?" The eunuch read in his chariot, Acts 8:28. The Bereans examined the Scriptures daily, Acts 17:11. Therefore, let everyone make it a daily practice, in the morning before beginning their work, alone and with their family. In the

afternoon, when taking care of bodily needs, nourish the soul as well. In the evening, after finishing the day's work, conclude the day with some refreshment from the Word. In between tasks, contemplate what you have read. This practice keeps the soul in communion with God, helps one understand and feel the Word in its spiritual sense and power, allows spiritual growth, guards against vain thoughts, restrains the tongue, suppresses sinful tendencies, and guides individuals in the fear of God.

XLII. For this purpose, preparation, meditation, and reflection are necessary.

1. Preparation. Every time you sit down to read:

(a) Gather yourself and present yourself before the Lord, assuming a reverent posture of the heart, with an awareness that the Lord will speak to you; let holy awe make you tremble. Think of Isaiah 1:2, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord has spoken."

(b) Lift your heart to the Lord, praying for the Spirit through whom the Word was written, that He may reveal the truth in the Word to us and impress it upon our hearts, saying: Psalm 119:18, "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law."

(c) Along with this, incline your heart to obedience, believing, comforting, and obeying all that the Lord will present, promise, and command, saying: 1 Samuel 3:9, "Speak, for your servant hears."

XLII. 2. Meditation.

While reading, it is necessary to maintain composure and attentiveness, not rushing to finish or complete the task. It is better to read less if time is limited, as long as you are attentive. Reading the Word can be done in two ways, depending on one's time and ability, either by examining or by allowing oneself to be affected.

Examination Reading.

Studious or examining reading involves investigating the context with what comes before and after, the style of speech, the purpose and intention, comparing the text with other passages where the matter is explained more extensively, and with parallel verses. In this case, consulting footnotes, an excellent resource, is highly recommended; this will shed great light. This approach helps you discover the literal meaning.

However, one should not cling only to the letter, as many scholars do, contenting themselves with the outer shell, which provides neither strength nor nourishment for the soul. Instead, delve into the core, into the inner nature of the matter itself. A natural person is blind here, no matter how learned, how experienced in the Word, or how skilled at understanding the context and explaining the literal meaning to others. But a godly person immediately begins to see spiritual matters in their clarity, nature, and power, and he grows in this as he continues to contemplate and reflect on these matters. No matter how many times he reads the same letters or chapters, he always sees something new, something he had not noticed before, and it is always fresh and sweeter each time. It is true that sometimes, while seeking the literal meaning, one may not experience as many spiritual movements as when engaged in other aspects, but it equips you to better understand the Holy Scripture,

making it easier to be affected later, more deeply, and more powerfully.

XLIII. There are four harmful pitfalls to avoid here; if anyone falls into these, they will not grasp the true meaning of the Word but obscure its spirituality. We must avoid:

1. Interpreting words to mean everything they can. The first thing to avoid is interpreting words to mean everything they can mean individually and taking that as the only correct meaning of the Word, as long as it does not contradict the rule of faith and the context of the text. This is self-deception and distorts the Scripture. The meaning of Scripture is simple, clear, straightforward, precise, and expresses matters more clearly than any human could. Therefore, in every place, one must search for the sole and proper meaning and intention of the Spirit.
2. Imposing seven periods. The second thing to avoid is forcing everything into the framework of seven periods or ages. The entire concept of seven periods is a misunderstanding. It might be tolerable if this were only applied to the Book of Revelation, although even then one will never grasp the true meaning of Revelation. But it is intolerable to seek seven periods throughout the entire Bible, fitting everything into one of those periods; this removes the true meaning, spirituality, and power from the Word.
3. Turning everything into prophecies. The third thing to avoid is turning everything into prophecies, associating them with a specific time in the New Testament, claiming that it has been fulfilled or is yet to be fulfilled, leaving almost nothing for the present. Finding the church and the Antichrist everywhere, even

interpreting all the parables and metaphors of the Lord Jesus in the Gospels as prophecies and finding the church and the Antichrist in them. This distorts the Word and deprives it of its spirituality and power. It is true that not all ceremonies from Adam to Christ and not all prophecies in the OLD TESTAMENT have been explained in the NEW TESTAMENT. Therefore, it is a sweet and profitable study to explore those that have not been explained in the NEW TESTAMENT and are certain and infallible. For often, one finds extraordinary explanations of the Lord Jesus' nature and the execution of the Mediatorial office and the fulfillment of prophecies, thereby increasing our knowledge and greatly strengthening our faith. However, one must exercise wisdom and moderation in this regard, and avoid boldly stating that this and nothing else is the meaning. How many times have we, and others, been deceived in interpreting prophecies and later realized that we had misunderstood them! Godly humility is necessary here.

4. Understanding no text without its context. The fourth thing to avoid is the belief that one cannot understand any passage of Holy Scripture unless one understands it in its context. In addition to the fact that the context is usually clear in itself, it is generally easier for a godly, uneducated reader to understand than is often claimed, at least easier than it is for a learned, natural person. A godly person, reading in simplicity because he understands the spiritual nature of things, will often understand the context much better, even though he cannot always explain it to others as a learned natural person can. However, context is not always necessary to understand a verse or saying. There are thousands of statements in the Word that, taken individually and alone, read or heard, have a complete meaning and express matters powerfully enough for belief, comfort, and awakening.

For example: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life." "Ask, and you will receive." "Blessed are the poor in spirit." "Those who mourn." "The meek." "Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness," and so on. Many sayings are presented without context, and searching for context would obscure their meaning. This concludes the discussion on interpretative reading.

How to Read the Word Practically.

XLIV. The Scriptures can also be read without those studious investigations into meaning, which can be called practical reading. In this mode, one approaches the Word with a humble, hungry, and obedient disposition of the soul. When hearing the voice of God, one reads slowly and thoughtfully, allowing the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts. If something comes up that is not immediately understood, it is set aside for the time being, and the reading continues. If a particular passage has a special impact on the heart, one lingers, allowing the heart to be moved, praying, giving thanks, rejoicing, marveling, becoming enlivened for obedience, and then continuing to read. After reading a chapter, one reflects on it when time allows. If a remarkable verse appears, one marks it or commits it to memory. Thus, scholars and laypeople alike should read the Word, and in doing so, the spiritual meaning will become clearer and the Word will become sweeter with time.

John 7:17: "If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority."

John 8:31-32: "Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'"

2. Afterthought.

XLV. Afterthought consists of the following:

(a) Gratefully thanking the Lord for having allowed the Word to be written, for having it in one's home, for being able to read it, for having read it, and for the impact it has had on one's heart.

(b) Carefully preserving the good disposition acquired through reading.

(c) Recalling the reading during one's daily work and constantly turning one's thoughts back to it.

(d) If the opportunity arises, sharing it with others for conversation.

(e) Particularly striving to put what has been read into practice. If the Holy Scriptures were used in this way, there would be marvelous progress in knowledge and godliness; children would quickly become young men, and young men would become mature in Christ Jesus.

Chapter 3

On God

In the previous section, we discussed the two principles by which God is known: nature and the Holy Scriptures. Now, we turn our attention to the contemplation of God Himself. This is a task that one must approach with reverence, ensuring that our thoughts about God are fitting and our reflections are appropriately profound. May the Lord guide me in describing Him and reveal Himself to all who read or hear these words, for the strengthening of the confessors of truth, the refutation of Socinians, Remonstrants, and other wanderers, and for guidance on the path of godliness!

In the discussion of God, we will address the following:

1. Names of God.
2. The Divine Essence.
3. Attributes of God.
4. Persons of God.
5. The works of God, both internal and external, encompassing the works of nature and the works of grace.

God's Name. I. It is necessary to have a word to speak about God to others, indicating whom we are speaking about, but not to distinguish God from others, for there is only one God. Just as it was sufficient for the first man to bear the name "man" because there was no other, and just as the Savior needs no other name than Jesus, Savior, because there is only one, so God requires no other name than God.

Jehovah. Although a name cannot fully express the infinite Being, the Lord has been pleased to give Himself a Name by which He desires to be called. This name has reference:

- To His Essence,
- And to His mode of existence or the Divine Persons.

Regarding His Essence, it is יהוה, JEHOVAH, abbreviated as יה, Jah. Concerning the three Persons, it is מִיְהוָה, ELOHIM. Often, these two words are combined as יהוה, JEHOVI, which, according to the letters or consonants, is Jehovah and according to the vowel points or vowels, is Elohim. These two words are frequently found together: Jehovah Elohim, signifying that God is one in Essence and three in Persons. The Jews do not pronounce the word Jehovah, perhaps initially out of reverence, and later due to superstition. Instead, they use the word יְהוָה, Adonai, which is often used in the Scriptures in reference to the Lord. It means "my Lord." When used in reference to others, it is written with a patach, which is a short "a." But when used in reference to the Lord, it is written with a kametz, which is a long "aa," and it has the same vowels as Jehovah, with the letter "e" being changed to a chatef-patach, which is the shortest "a" sound at the throat. In our translations, the word Jehovah is expressed as Lord, as in the Greek kurion and kurios, which are not translations of Jehovah but of Adonai. The apostle John translates the word Jehovah in Revelation 1:4 and Revelation 16:5 as "He who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." For this single word signifies Being or Existence, and it incorporates the signs of the past, present, and future, making it equivalent to eternal existence. Therefore, in French Bibles, the word Jehovah is translated as "the Eternal" (l'Éternel). The word Jehovah is not found anywhere in the entire New Testament, which would certainly have retained it if there were a necessity to do so in all languages. It is claimed that it cannot

be pronounced in Greek, which, rather than rendering it powerless, affirms our assertion. Even though it is contrary to the usual elegance of that language, it is by no means impossible for them. They can say Jesus, Hosanna, Levi, Abraham, Hallelujah, so they can surely pronounce the sound of Jehovah. I do not mean to say that one should not use the word Jehovah, but one must not attribute necessity, greater spirituality, or higher wisdom to it. To use it as a way to distinguish oneself from others and indicate one's theological beliefs is worldly. Jehovah is not a common name that many share through similarity, like angel or human; it is a proper name that belongs to God alone and to no one else, just as each creature has its own name.

Never Given to Any Creature

II. The question at hand is whether anyone or any creature is referred to by the name Jehovah in the Scriptures, or if this name belongs solely to God? Answer: The Socinians, in order to deny that the Lord Jesus is the true God, claim that this name is also given to others. However, we deny this and assert that this name belongs exclusively to God and that no one else is called by it except the true God. This is evident from the following:

1. From the composition of the word. Linguists know that this Name bears all the marks of a proper name and never has anything in common with common names. Because God is called by this Name, it is God's proper name.
2. This Name can only apply to the Lord God because it signifies an eternal being, the cause of all beings, and remains unchangeable.
3. The Lord claims this Name as uniquely His own, as seen in Isaiah 42:8: "I am Jehovah; that is My name; and My glory I will

not give to another." Exodus 15:3 states, "Jehovah is His name!" Exodus 3:13, 14: "And they shall say to me, 'What is His name? What shall I say to them?' And God said, 'I AM WHO I AM.'... 'I AM' has sent me to you." These words convey the meaning of Jehovah, and Jehovah comes from "I AM." In Exodus 6:2, the Lord says, "But by My name Jehovah, I was not known to them." This does not mean that they did not call the Lord by the name Jehovah before, for even Eve used that name in Genesis 4:1: "I have acquired a man from Jehovah!" However, the Lord had not yet allowed them to experience the full meaning of that name, namely, to remain the same, unchanging in His promises, which they would see as He led them from Egypt to the promised land of Canaan.

III. Objection 1.

Created angels also bear this Name. Genesis 16:13 says, "She called the name of the Lord who spoke to her: 'You are the God of seeing.'" The one who spoke to her was an angel, as he is referred to in the previous verse. Answer: (a) It is to be believed that Hagar did not know whether it was a prophet or an angel sent by God to her, so she attributes his words as spoken by the Lord Himself. Similarly, the shepherds in Bethlehem said, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us" (Luke 2:15). Hagar named the Name of the angel, as she believed, not the God of seeing, but the Lord who spoke to her through the messenger's service. (b) However, in reality, it was the Son of God who, even before His incarnation, often appeared in human form and is referred to as the Angel of the Lord, the Angel of the Lord's presence, and the Angel of the Covenant in relation to His role as the Mediator. He says in verse 10, "I will greatly multiply your descendants," which is not the work of a created angel but solely of

God. Therefore, Hagar referred to Jehovah, who spoke to her, as the God of seeing, whether she recognized that it was Jehovah Himself speaking to her or whether she identified Jehovah as speaking to her through a messenger.

Objection 2.

In Genesis 18, the angel who came to Abraham is called Jehovah multiple times. Answer: It was the uncreated Angel, the Son of God Himself. Because:

(a) He is explicitly distinguished from the other two angels, who are not called Jehovah but only this one.

(b) The Angel Jehovah knew that Sarah, who was in the tent, laughed (verse 13). He foretold the birth of Isaac, which was naturally impossible (verse 10). He knew that Abraham would teach and exhort his children and household to godliness (verse 19), something that belongs to God alone.

(c) Abraham acknowledged Him as the Judge of all the earth (verse 25). He prayed to Him with the deepest religious humility (verse 27).

Objection 3.

Moses named the altar he built "Jehovah" in Exodus 17:15. And Moses built an altar and called its name, "The LORD Is My Banner." Answer: This objection is directly against the text. It does not say that he named the altar Jehovah, for then he would have stopped there. Instead, it says, "The LORD Is My Banner." Just as one cannot say that he named the altar "banner," one cannot say that he named it Jehovah. It was a motto, a symbol that he associated with the altar (similar to how proverbs are written on gates and doors) to signify

that the Lord, the God of the covenant, was their help, of which the altar, a type of the Lord Jesus, was a proof.

Objection 4.

The church is called Jehovah in Ezekiel 48:35. "And the name of the city (Jerusalem) from that day shall be: שמה יהוה Jehovah Shammah, the Lord is there." Answer: This is a saying that would be used concerning the church. It would be said of the church: "The Lord is there." God dwells among her with His protection and blessings.

Elohim.

IV. The name that pertains to the manner of existence or the Divine Person is Elohim, which in Greek is Theos, and in our language, God. In the singular, it is very rarely found as יהוה, Eloah, and never in the dual.

Refers to the three persons. In the plural or when more than two are mentioned, it is commonly used. With this word, the verb (work) is usually added in the singular because the three Persons are one, as stated in 1 John 5:7. However, with the word Elohim, the verb, or an adjective or a noun in apposition, is sometimes added in the plural, and it is always accompanied by a plural suffix. See this:

- Genesis 1:26. And Elohim, God said, "Let us make man."
- Genesis 20:13. When Elohim God made me wander.
- Joshua 24:19. Elohim Kedoshim, God is holy.
- Ecclesiastes 12:1. Remember Boreécha, your Creator.
- Isaiah 54:5. Bognalaich Gnosaich, your Maker is your husband.
- Exodus 20:2. I am Jehovah Eloheka, your God.

Is not a common but a proper name. Elohim is not a common name that can be equally applied to many, but it is the proper name of God, belonging to God alone. For no one exists as Elohim in three Persons except the Lord alone. However, it is also used improperly for others. The idols are called Elohim because of the reverence and service that idolaters show them. Angels are also called by this name because they are emanations of God's glory and power. Authorities are also referred to this way because of their authority and governance, in which they are reflections of God's sovereignty. Many other names are attributed to God in Scripture, such as the Almighty, the Most High, the Holy One, and the like, which are descriptions and expressions of His perfections.

The Essence of God is incomprehensible.

V. Moving from the names of God, we now turn to the ESSENCE, the BEING of God. But what shall I say about it? Jacob once asked the Lord for His Name, that is, for His Essence, because in the initial act of naming, the Name expressed the nature of the thing. But he received the answer in Genesis 32:29, "Why do you ask my name?" God did not want him to delve further into the mysteries of God. To the inquiring Manoah, the Lord said in Judges 13:18, "Why do you ask thus about My Name? It is Wonderful." Isaiah 9:5, "His Name shall be called... Wonderful."

You, who imagine some knowledge of God, tell me: What is His Name, and what is the Name of His Son, if you know it? Proverbs 30:4. I can only say that the Essence of God is His self-subsistent, eternal being.

Expressed by: I AM.

When Moses asked what he should say if the children of Israel asked who had sent him, the Lord said: I AM THAT I AM. He also said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you" (Exodus 3:14). Job said of the Lord, Job 12:16, "With Him is strength and sound wisdom." The Hebrew word "thousia" comes from "jaschah," from which "jeesch" is derived, meaning: to be, to exist, to remain constant and enduring.

Deity, Godhood, Nature, Form.

In the NEW TESTAMENT, this is expressed with the words "Theiotees," Deity, Romans 1:20, "Theotees," Godhood, Colossians 2:9, "Physis," Nature, Galatians 4:8, "Morphee," Form or Gestalt, Philippians 2:6. For those who wish to know more about this Essence of God, let them close their eyes to this inaccessible Light and worship that which somewhat reveals itself to the soul, but whose utmost limits can only be seen through the contemplation of the Divine attributes. Here we will deviate from our usual manner of discussion and not dwell on the points of difference, so as not to give anyone the opportunity to have improper thoughts about God, as the Socinian heathens and those who follow them do. Nevertheless, we will handle the opposing views discreetly, presenting and affirming the truth while addressing objections.

The Attributes of God.

VI. Our language is physical; our words and expressions are taken from earthly things. Therefore, it is a wondrous thing and a goodness of God that a person can convey to another spiritual and divine matters through the physical sound of words. Our understanding is finite and small; it must create various designs or concepts just to comprehend a single thing. This is the goodness of God, that He accommodates Himself to our limited understanding, which cannot

grasp a single concept of God in which everything that can be thought or said about Him is one and the same. Thus, He reveals Himself to humanity through many designs and concepts, which we, in a manner of speaking, treat as essential attributes concerning the diversity of objects with which God interacts and the deeds that God accomplishes. However, we understand them in a divine manner to be one in God, so that the attributes neither differ from the Divine Essence nor from one another substantially and essentially in God, but are in the simple and single Essence of God Himself. However, we grasp each one separately. Righteousness and mercy are the same in God, but concerning objects and effects, we form different concepts of them. Our God is incomparable and perfectly incomprehensible, and therefore simple and singular. Thus, there can be no difference between God and God, and nothing that is substantively distinct from God can perfect Him. But our limited understanding grasps each thing on its own, and we name each thing differently. What we understand about God is true: God is so. But our finite understanding cannot penetrate into that perfection and infinity of God.

Distinguished into communicable and incommunicable.

VII. The attributes or perfections of God are commonly distinguished into communicable and incommunicable. All the attributes, because they are the very essence of God Himself, are incommunicable concerning their nature, but the distinction is only in terms of likeness. God created man in His image and likeness and renews fallen chosen ones in that image, making them partakers of the Divine nature. This does not imply deification or becoming partakers of the Essence of God and His attributes themselves because, on God's side, He is incommunicable, and finite man cannot comprehend anything of God's Essence since God is infinite,

singular, and thus indivisible. Therefore, if man were to partake of anything of the Divine Essence or any attribute of God, he would possess the entire Godhead, and man would become God.

However, the image and likeness of God in man pertains only to the likeness of some of God's attributes, which in God are infinite, indivisible, and incommunicable, and with which man has some resemblance, not in equality but in some similarity. Some attributes are such that in the rational creature, there is not even the slightest resemblance; in fact, the opposite is true, and these are called incommunicable. But because there is a radiance or some resemblance of some of God's attributes in man, they are called communicable.

- The incommunicable attributes are: perfection, or self-sufficiency; eternity, infinity, or omnipresence; simplicity or singularity; immutability.
- The communicable attributes are those related to understanding, will, and power. We will discuss each of these individually to demonstrate the nature of the God we serve.

The incommunicable attributes: Perfection.

VII. In creatures, perfection consists of possessing the degree of goodness that God has given and prescribed in creation. All creatures, no matter how great their degree of perfection, must receive their being and well-being from outside themselves. But God's perfection excludes all of this. He needs nothing. No one can add anything to Him or take anything away, increase or decrease His blessedness. His perfection is His independence, His existence from Himself, the First, Revelation 1:8. His self-sufficiency in Himself and for Himself, El Shaddai, the All-Sufficient. Genesis 17:1. Acts 17:25. He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything. Job

22:8. Will it be any advantage to the Almighty if you are righteous? Or is it a gain to Him that you make your ways perfect? Psalm 16:2. My goodness extends not to You.

So, the perfection of God and the perfection of creatures have nothing in common except the name. In man, the opposite of God's perfection is true. Thus, God's perfection is an incommunicable attribute of God. It is man's blessedness to know, honor, and serve God. Such is our God, who is not only self-sufficient but can so abundantly fill and satisfy the soul with His self-sufficiency that it lacks nothing else but God. When the soul is overwhelmed by it, it is filled with light, love, and joy to the point where it desires nothing else. Psalm 73:25. Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides You!

Eternity.

IX. We humans are of yesterday, have a beginning, and exist in a flowing and successive time. We cannot even conceive eternity but understand it by comparing it to time, and that by way of negation: without beginning, without progress, without end. If we attempt to ascend higher and comprehend the "how" of God's eternity, we corrupt and obscure ourselves. Or, if we want to bring God's eternity within the scope of our time-based understanding, we will dishonor God and form wrong concepts of Him. We remove from God anything that is time or resembles time, and everything we inappropriately call eternity.

We call eternity:

(a) Permanence until it has served its purpose; thus, circumcision is called an everlasting covenant. Genesis 17:13. "And My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant." That is, until the

coming of the Lord Jesus, the fulfillment of all rites in which all shadows end, and there can be no further place for them. Alternatively, it can be understood that the covenant confirmed by circumcision is an everlasting covenant.

(b) A permanence of a condition as long as the subject exists, as long as the human being lives, Deuteronomy 15:17. "He shall be your servant forever."

(c) That which is firm and steadfast; thus, the hills are called everlasting. Deuteronomy 33:15.

(d) That which will never end, such as the blessedness after this life, John 10:28. "I give them eternal life."

All of these we call eternity, but none of them has anything in common with the true eternity, the being of God. We can express it in no other way than as God's existence without beginning, succession, or end, always the same. This is indicated by the name Jehovah, which signifies a Being possessing all time—past, present, and future—simultaneously. "He who is, who was, and who is to come." God's essence is eternity, and eternity is God's essence, not a coincidence like time is to a creature. God's essence cannot be successive because it is simple and unchangeable, just as God's eternity cannot be successive. The Holy Scripture calls God the eternal God. Genesis 21:33. "He called on the name of the eternal God." Deuteronomy 33:27. "The eternal God is your refuge!" God is described as the beginning and the end in Revelation 1:8, distinctions in God but simultaneous, with no intervening time or anything resembling the passage of time.

Psalm 90:2. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to

everlasting, You are God."

That is, there is no comparison between God and time. So, when years, days, past, and future time are attributed to God and He is called the Ancient of Days and similar expressions, it is done in a human manner so that we humans, who cannot form appropriate thoughts and words about eternity, might, by way of analogy—though entirely dissimilar in nature—understand something of eternity as far as we need to, while still negating that it applies to God. God is always, while our time flows. God was yesterday, is today, and will be tomorrow. However, when time measures creatures, it does not measure God, who is above and beyond time. And when this or that is attributed to God as a work He has done, will do tomorrow, or is doing today, it does not imply any change of time in God, but changes in the objects and effects. So, do not exalt yourselves above the reach of your understanding, and do not limit God according to your human comprehension. Acknowledge and believe that God dwells in incomprehensible eternity. Lose yourselves in eternity, worship what you cannot understand, and, like Abraham, call on the name of the eternal God.

Infinity and Omnipresence.

X. Finite is that which has a limitation in its essence, whether that essence is spiritual or physical. Thus, the entire structure of heaven and earth, as well as every creature within it, is finite. The world is finite; even though there is no body that would define the world in such a way that its outermost boundary would be halted and prevented from extending further, it is nevertheless defined by its own extension. For if we were to measure straight from the center, we would eventually reach the outermost boundary beyond which there is nothing, and that space has its specific length. God, however,

has no limitation in His essence, neither through His own essence nor through any external limitation; He is absolutely infinite with respect to His essence.

Sometimes, we improperly use the term "infinite" to describe things of which we don't know the end, such as the number of grains of sand, blades of grass, or stars. We also use "infinite" for things to which we can always add more, like numbers; no matter how much you count, the number can be even or odd depending on what you add to it. But when we say that God is infinite, we mean it in the proper sense, that in His essence, He is immediately without any limitation or end; there is an infinity of power, an infinity of knowledge, and an infinity of essence in God; we are speaking of the latter here.

Just as eternity is incomprehensible to us because we are temporal, we cannot comprehend God's infinity because we are spatial and finite. We understand infinity in terms of extension, but God's essence is infinite without quantity, extension, or locality. In order for us to have some understanding of the infinity of the Divine Essence, we use imperfect comparisons of extension, while still negating that such comparisons apply to God.

The fact that God is infinite in His essence is evident from:

(a) God's perfection; everything that is defined and finite is imperfect because a broader definition would make it more perfect, and the undefined is better and more perfect than the defined.

(b) God's infinity in power, for infinity of power cannot be in a being that is finite.

(c) This is what God says of Himself through His Spirit. Psalm 145:3. "The Lord is great and greatly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable." 1 Kings 8:27. "Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You." One of Job's friends speaks of God's infinity, both in knowledge and essence. Job 11:7, 8, 9. "Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than heaven—what can you do? Deeper than Sheol—what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea."

The manner is incomprehensible.

Infinity and omnipresence are one and the same in God. However, when we refer to omnipresence, we indicate the infinite God with respect to the places where God is present, not by description like bodies that are enclosed within their own space due to their extension, nor by limitation like spirits that are present in one place but not elsewhere, but by filling, not locally, physically, or by extension, but by His essence. God is in Christ through personal union, in heaven with His glory, in His church with His grace, in every believer with His life-giving Spirit, and in hell with His righteous wrath. However, He is everywhere in the created universe, not only by His power and knowledge but also by His essence, not by extension or parts, but by His infinite, simple, indivisible Being. This is as incomprehensible to a creature as eternity; therefore, we must close the eyes of our understanding regarding the manner, believe that God is as He reveals Himself in nature and Scripture.

Nature itself teaches this to every human being, especially to those who make any study of the knowledge of God and religion. They experience the omnipresence of God so that, at any given moment, in all places on the entire earth, wherever each person may be, they not

only recognize God as almighty and all-knowing but also as actually present with them. Wise heathens have expressed this forcefully.

God clearly says this in His Word. Isaiah 66:1. "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool." When this is said of a king, it signifies his immediate and physical presence. So when God speaks of Himself in this way in human terms, it is so that we would understand and acknowledge His essential presence in heaven and earth. Jeremiah 23:23, 24. "Am I a God near at hand," says the Lord, "and not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places so I shall not see him?" Acts 17:27, 28. "So that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being." Consider also the passages in which God is said to be not only in heaven and on earth but also infinitely beyond them. 1 Kings 8:27.

Various Expressions Explained.

XI. When God is said to be in heaven, it does not exclude that God is also present everywhere on earth. God is nowhere confined, nor is He excluded anywhere. God displays His glorious presence in a much more apparent manner in heaven, His throne, than on earth, the footstool of His feet. These expressions convey the exalted and sublime glory of God above all creatures. When a person raises the eyes of their heart upward while praying, they signify that they recognize God as invisible and wholly distinct from everything on earth.

When God is said not to have been in the strong wind, earthquake, and fire but in the whisper of a gentle breeze (1 Kings 19:11, 12), this is not speaking of His essential presence but of His communication with Elijah and His revelation to him. When God is said not to be with someone or not to go up in the midst of Israel (Exodus 33:3), it

speaks of the manifestation of His favor, not His essential presence. It is not unbecoming for God to be present in dirty and foul places, for God is not there through physical contact or mixture but as the working, sustaining, and governing cause, just as He is in the wicked and devils as a avenging Judge. The sun shines on everything without being polluted. A body cannot act on a spirit, much less on the infinite God. Just as it is not unbecoming for God to create and rule, it is not unbecoming for Him to be essentially present there. God reveals Himself through His works in the world, but not as a God from afar, but as a God who is invisibly present.

For the Sanctification of Believers.

XII. Believers!

Because the Lord is always present with you, surrounding your every step and watching over you from behind and in front (Psalm 139:3-5), be careful not to do anything that would be unbecoming in His presence. Keep the Lord continually before you, acknowledge Him in all your ways, fear Him, stand in awe of Him, walk in all reverence and humility before His face. For to sin in the presence of God greatly aggravates the sin. The presence of people prevents the commission of many sins; therefore, if the presence of God does not do the same, it shows that you have more regard for people than for the high and holy God. This is a mockery and provocation of God! Therefore, be on guard, let the fear of God's presence prevent you from sinning against Him and encourage you to live pleasingly before the Lord.

And for Consolation.

On the other hand, let the presence of God, O believers, be a constant support and consolation to you in all your adversities and

encounters. The Lord is with you; He is a fiery wall all around you, and no one can touch you without His permission. When you encounter difficulties, take refuge in Him and strengthen yourself with His presence. This was David's comfort (Psalm 23:4): "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me."

With these words, the Lord comforts His children (Isaiah 43:2): "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you."

Simplicity or Unity.

XIII. Just as we cannot comprehend eternity because we are temporal, and infinity and omnipresence without extension because we are finite and local, we also cannot comprehend the simplicity or unity of God because we are composite. Nevertheless, because we know that all composition implies imperfection, dependence, and divisibility, we exclude all composition from God and acknowledge the Lord as absolutely and entirely one and simple.

There are various types of composition that are all denied of God. Philosophers propose various types of composition, all of which we deny of God, such as:

1. A logical composition, Ex genere et differentia; from the genus (or nature) and difference. For example, man is an animal, and a beast is an animal; animality is their commonality; both belong to the genus of animals. But besides animality, each has something that distinguishes them from each other. Man possesses reason alongside animality, whereas a beast possesses irrationality and foolishness. God, however, shares nothing in

common with any creature; by His essence, He transcends all creatures and is distinguished from them. When God is called a Spirit, the term "spirit" is not attributed to God and angels as a common nature in which both God and angels participate equally. Rather, the term is used to help us understand God's invisibility.

2. A physical or natural composition. This is of three kinds: a. From matter or substance and form; b. From subject or substance and accidents or attributes; c. Or from parts.

(a) From matter or substance and form. Every bodily creature, apart from its substance, has something that defines it as what it is, whether it be gold, a tree, an animal, or a human. This is far removed from God, who is incorporeal and entirely beyond any form of corporeality, no matter how refined or subtle. This is why God is called a Spirit; He is distinct. Therefore, such compositions have no place in God.

(b) From subject and accidents. For instance, an angel possesses an angelic nature and, apart from that nature, possesses attributes such as intellect, wisdom, will, holiness, and power. These attributes are not the angel himself but something in addition to his essence. His essence is the subject of these qualities, which perfect him. Such composition is also absent in God, for God's essence is perfect, and nothing can be added to His perfection. All that is in God is God Himself—His goodness, wisdom, and omnipotence are God, the good, wise, and almighty God Himself.

(c) From parts that, when combined, make a whole, as is the case with bodies. This is entirely foreign to God because God is a

Spirit and shares nothing in common with a body. Furthermore, if this were the case in God, there would be something in Him that was not perfect, for the whole is more perfect than any part.

3. A metaphysical or supernatural composition. This is of three kinds:

(a) *Ex essentia et Ex istentia*, from essence and existence. These are distinct in our way of understanding; one can be comprehended without the other. For example, a rose can be described and understood for what it is, even in winter when there are no roses. But God's essence is His existence, and His existence is His essence; this is signified by His name, Jehovah. One cannot be distinguished from the other; one cannot be understood without the other, for they are one.

(b) *Ex potentia et actu*, from potentiality and actuality. Potentiality can be either active or passive.

- Active potentiality is the power to act even when not acting. In creatures, this is distinct from the act, and a creature is more perfect when it can act without necessarily acting. However, this is not the case with God; His power and action are one. God is a single, active power. The distinction and change occur in creatures, which are created, sustained, and governed. But in God, the Creator, Sustainer, and Ruler, there is no such distinction or change.
- Passive potentiality, or more understandably in our language, possibility, exists only in creatures. It has three aspects: something that does not yet exist but can be brought into existence by the power of an active cause, something that exists but can be changed by the power of a cause, and something that

exists but can be destroyed or annihilated. Clearly, none of these aspects apply to God. (c) Ex essentia et subsistentia, from nature or essence, and subsistence or personality.

- Subsistence or existence is a way of having existence added to one's being, enabling something to exist not in another but by itself, with complete self-sufficiency so that existence presupposes essence and being.
- Suppositum, or what exists, is something that cannot in any way be shared with others or be in another as part or form. If this self-existent being is rational, it is called a person. A person is an indivisible substance of a rational nature. Now, a person can either be human, such as John, Peter, or Paul, or angelic, such as Gabriel or Michael, or divine, such as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In every created person, there is a composition of essence, existence, and subsistence; these are distinct from each other. In God, there is no composition of essence and person, for all composition implies imperfection. Each divine Person is not distinct from the divine essence or from the other Persons as one thing from another. They are not distinct as substance and substance, one thing from another; nor as substance and mode of substance, distinct from substance. We humans conceive of this in terms of relation and regard and in terms of modes of existence that indicate distinction rather than composition. We believe and worship that which we cannot fully comprehend because God reveals Himself in this way, and believers, illuminated by the Spirit of God, know as much as is necessary for wonder, glorification of God, joy, trust, and sanctification.

The simplicity, as demonstrated. The Holy Scripture reveals this simplicity when it speaks of God in the abstract, in abstraction, divinity, deity, as it names God Light, 1 John 1:5. God is light. Truth,

Deuteronomy 32:4. God is truth. Love, 1 John 4:8. God is love; this cannot be said of any creature.

When it is said that man is from God, is of God's race, is God's child, and partakes in the Divine nature, and when God is said to be the Father of spirits, this does not mean that man has the same essence that God has, so that God's Essence would be communicable. Rather, this is said concerning creation and rebirth, in which some resemblance to certain attributes of God is given to man. This creation is not a change in God but in the creature. Likewise, the decrees, considered internally in God, are God Himself who decrees. And the relationship that God establishes with His creatures does not imply change or composition in God; for relationship is merely external and adds nothing to His essence. When human members, hands, eyes, mouth, are attributed to God, it is done in a human manner to help us understand such actions of God as we perform through those members. And when emotions like anger, love, and the like are attributed to God, it is to be understood as referring to the consequences and effects that we accomplish through those emotions.

Immutability.

XIV. Change pertains either to some created substance, or to accidents and circumstances, or to the will. Every creature is in some way subject to change, having within itself the possibility of changing and being changed. But the Lord, our God, is absolutely and in all respects unchangeable, in His Essence and His will; indeed, all possibility of change is far from God. This is proven:

1. From the Name Jehovah. From the Name of God Jehovah, which means: an eternal Being; with this, God demonstrates His immutability, Exodus 6:2. But by my name Jehovah I was not

known to them. That is: I had given them the promise of Canaan, but I had not fulfilled it in their time, and I had not shown to them by deed that I am unchangeable. But to you, their descendants, I will show that I am Jehovah, the unchangeable God, by fulfilling My promise to you.

2. From Scripture passages.

- Consider these and similar passages. Psalm 102:26, 27, 28. You have previously laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will remain; and they will all wear out like a garment; You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away. But You are the same, and Your years will have no end.
- Malachi 3:6. For I am the LORD, I do not change.
- James 1:17. With whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.
- Hebrews 6:17. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel.
- 1 Samuel 15:29. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent.
- Isaiah 14:27. For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?

3. From Reasons. It also becomes evident through these reasons. All change occurs because there is a changeable principle within or because one is in a state where they can be changed by another. Now, God is eternal and above all, the beginning of all. All change arises either from a lack of wisdom, then seeing that one has made a mistake in His work. But God is the Supreme Wisdom, the only wise God. Or it arises from a lack of foreknowledge, where one did not see what they would

encounter, and something unexpected happens. Now, God knows everything beforehand. All His works are known to Him from eternity. He sees everything one will do and refrain from doing out of free will, so in all their actions, they depend on Him; He knows from afar all our thoughts, our sitting and rising, our speaking and silence. Or it arises from a lack of power to carry out His intention and overcome hindrances. Now, God is the Almighty, wise in counsel and mighty in deeds; thus, even the slightest change cannot take place in God. Moreover, if God were to change, it would be for the better or worse. Neither of these can be said of God because He always remains the Infinitely Perfect. God wills that certain things will change, but His will does not change for that reason. When repentance is attributed to God, it does not imply a change in God but rather a different action towards the objects than before, and this according to His unchangeable decree. If God promises or threatens something and it does not come to pass, it indicates that a condition was understood, whether expressed or implied, upon the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of which the matter would come to pass or not. This condition was also known beforehand in God's omniscience and counsel. To become Creator, Sustainer, Ruler, Redeemer, Father, does not indicate any change in God but in the creatures. The relationship that God thus obtains with the creatures consists only in relationship, and relationship does not change the objects involved in the relationship.

For the Terror of the Ungodly.

XV. Because God is unchangeable, unconverted sinners, be afraid! For all the threats and judgments, both temporal and eternal, that

have been pronounced against you, will surely and unavoidably come upon you if you do not repent.

And for the Comfort of the Godly.

And you, believers, take comfort in the unchangeableness of the Lord, for all the promises to which you are heirs will surely be fulfilled for you. Not one of them will fall to the ground and be destroyed, no matter how strange and distant it may seem, or how long it may take, longer than you think it should. These are God's ways to make His children trust solely in His Word. To make the first things dark, to bring the opposite first, and then to show more clearly the unchangeableness of His counsel. Isaiah 64:5. In it there is eternity, that we may be saved. This concludes the discussion of the incommunicable attributes.

The Communicable Attributes.

XVI. The Communicable Attributes are no less infinite, and they are the simple God Himself, like the incommunicable attributes. But they are called communicable because God has communicated, not His attributes themselves, but some likeness, not equality, some reflection of these to rational creatures. All these can be grouped into three main categories: namely, intellect, will, and power, as follows:

- knowledge,
- will,
- power.

Knowledge Knowledge is distinct from human knowledge. Although there is some knowledge or science in rational creatures, there is,

nevertheless, an infinite distinction between the knowledge of God and that of creatures, both in terms of manner and objects.

1. In terms of manner. Human beings come to know a thing through deliberation and reasoning, deriving and deducing one thing from another. The beginning of their knowledge arises from the object through sensible species, perceptible forms that come from material creatures to the five external senses, and through intelligible species, understandable forms that come from the object to the intellect, which humans then reason about. In contrast, God's knowledge does not have its origin flowing from creatures to God but from God Himself to creatures. God does not know things as they are and work because they exist but rather as they will be and work according to His decree. God does not determine the outcome from the workings of causes; He does not arrive at the knowledge of creatures through investigation and reasoning. Instead, He knows them because He has decreed that they will be and work. He sees all things through His Being in a single glance, so to speak. He sees all things simultaneously, and each thing in particular, even down to the innermost nature of being. We cannot penetrate further into the manner of God's knowledge, but we must say, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it" (Psalm 139:6).
2. In terms of objects. Regarding the object, there is also an infinite distinction between human knowledge and God's knowledge. Humans know only a few things, and what they know, they know only superficially, as if at a glance, not penetrating to the deepest and innermost nature of things. "For we are but of yesterday and know nothing" (Job 8:9). "Behold, these are but the outskirts of his ways, and how small a whisper do we hear of

him!" (Job 26:14). But God knows: (a) Himself, and He knows Himself perfectly. "For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him?" (1 Corinthians 2:11). (b) God knows His omnipotence, that He can do all that He would want to do, and that whatever He would want to do, can also be and can be done, which is called the possibility of things. This is what the Lord Jesus said, "And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham" (Matthew 3:9). This is commonly referred to as "knowledge of simple intelligence," the knowledge of the singular understanding. (c) God also knows all things that are present and that will be before they exist, not only in general but also each one in particular, as if each thing or act were the only one. This knowledge is usually called "knowledge of vision" because it is about things that will be or are.

XVII. That the Lord does not possess ordinary knowledge of things but rather a distinct knowledge of each thing in particular is clearly attested in God's Word, not only in texts that speak generally of all things, such as Acts 15:18, which states, "Known to God from eternity are all his works," or Hebrews 4:13, which says, "And no creature is hidden from his sight," or 1 John 3:20, which asserts, "For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything." But also in passages that specifically address God's knowledge of each thing individually.

- Hebrews 4:13 declares, "No creature is hidden from his sight."
- Matthew 10:30 states, "But even the hairs of your head are all numbered."
- Psalm 147:4 proclaims, "He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names."

The Lord sees and knows:

(a) All great and small things. He knows the hearts of kings (Proverbs 21:1) and takes note of every sparrow (Matthew 10:29).

(b) All good and evil things, as in Psalm 90:8, which says, "You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence."

(c) All hidden things, as evidenced by 1 Kings 8:39, which proclaims, "you, you only, know the hearts of all the children of mankind," or Psalm 94:11, which says, "the LORD—knows the thoughts of man," and John 2:25, "for he himself knew what was in man."

(d) All future events, even those determined by the free will of man, and all things that occur in relation to humanity, and this knowledge is infallible. For God knows everything; all His works are known to Him from eternity; all things are naked and open before Him.

This is evident for the following reasons:

1. The word "everything" includes all things, including future contingent events determined by the free will of man. If God did not know these things, then God would be ignorant of many things, but He knows everything.
2. What is more contingent and dependent on the free will of man than his actions, thoughts, and words—his sitting and rising? The Lord knows all these things in advance, even before one thinks or speaks (Psalm 139:1-2). As Isaiah 48:8 states, "I knew that you would surely deal treacherously."
3. This knowledge is further confirmed by all the prophecies, especially those concerning things that would be accomplished by the free will of man. These are too numerous to detail here,

but consider the entire book of Revelation as an example. The Lord Jesus said in John 13:19, "I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he."

4. Nothing exists or comes to pass apart from God's action; God sustains all things by His almighty and omnipresent power. Nothing moves except through God's cooperation. Everything occurs according to His decree, whether He wills to accomplish it or to permit it and direct it to its end. Thus, it is clear that He knows all things in advance.

One will have a clearer understanding of this and be less confused if one keeps in mind that God knows all things because He has decreed all that occurs, and His knowledge does not come from second causes, as human knowledge does. Everything has a definite certainty with respect to God, the first cause of all things, even though it may appear uncertain with respect to second causes. There is no contingency with respect to God but only with respect to humanity. The freedom of the will does not consist in equality, indifference, or independence from God but in spontaneity, so that the freedom of the will is not violated by God's certain foreknowledge. For man acts without compulsion, out of pure choice, what God has decreed and known would occur.

That God is said in a human manner to test humanity, to know what is in them, and when He says, "Now I know that you fear God," it's not because God didn't know it beforehand from all eternity. Likewise, when it's spoken in a human manner that God is said to wait and see whether a person will do this or that, it doesn't mean that God was unaware of what would happen. Instead, it serves to rouse or warn humanity, letting them understand that God pays attention to their actions.

The adorned middle knowledge is explained.

XVIII. Jesuits, Remonstrants, and other proponents of free will embellish *scientiam mediam*, a middle knowledge that would stand between the absolute, natural knowledge of God's individual understanding, through which God knows the possibility of all things, and the voluntary knowledge of sight, through which He knows all things individually, in all circumstances, down to the smallest detail, because He has decreed it. I say that it stands between these two, and it is a means by which God knows one thing through another, the effect through the causes and circumstances.

By middle knowledge, they mean that knowledge of God through which God foresees future events, even though they are not yet considered certain to happen because no decision has been made regarding them. This knowledge is based on the assumption of other things, on which a person, through their free will, would act in one way or another.

For example, imagining God, if humanity had been created in perfection and faced such or such temptation from the devil, then He could foresee that, by their free will, humanity would misuse His gifts. Furthermore, imagining God, if humanity had fallen, and then the Gospel was preached to them and they were urged with various motivations, and that at such a time when humanity was most receptive, attentive, or prepared, then God could foresee and know who would repent, believe, persevere until death, and who would not. The same applies in other cases where angels or humans come into play, and their free will would determine how they would act.

The folly of this belief is evident for the following reasons:

Refuted. 1. Because of the certainty of God's knowledge.

XIX. 1. If such middle knowledge existed in God, then all God's knowledge of human actions would be uncertain and merely guesswork. According to their view, even though all circumstances that could be thought of to influence human will in one way or another were present, humanity would still, they claim, be free to want to do this or that, or not want to do it. No necessity would determine humans; thus, God's knowledge of this would also be uncertain, which is far from the all-knowing God.

2. Because humanity's will remains under God's power and control.

Middle knowledge suggests that God has no power over human voluntary actions, which is absurd both in relation to the Creator and to the creature. Voluntary actions did not become future in God as a cause, because nothing had been decided about them, and they had not yet been considered. These actions arise from humanity's free will. Indeed, God would then, in this regard, depend on the creature because He could not decide anything about humanity except through the mediation of humanity's free will. Everything would then be based on the condition: if it pleased humanity, who, according to their claim, is the master of their free will and cannot be determined by anyone but themselves. It is not enough for one to have control over the circumstances that could influence a person's will in one way or another, to bring about such and such a situation. Because, apart from the fact that these circumstances should not depend on a person's free will – for then it would again be in the power of humanity whether to provide such opportunities to someone else, say something to them, and so on – apart from that, if one did have such control, it would apply only to the circumstances and opportunities by which a person's will would be influenced, not

to the will itself, which would remain free, not dependent on God, and not under His control.

These absurdities follow from the middle knowledge of God. Once this knowledge is established, these conclusions must also be established because this knowledge, according to their claim, is based on things that appear to a person, causing them to act in one way or another, upon which such and such a thing would follow, and for which God would eventually make a decision. Thus, the entire nature of God and humanity is changed, and God is placed outside the power over His creation. Since all these things are absurd, so is this middle knowledge.

XX. Objection 1.

1 Samuel 23:11, 12, where the Lord answered David's question that Saul would come down and that the citizens of Keilah would deliver him into his hand. God had not decreed this, yet God knew it through the guidance of human free will.

Response.

There is no prediction here of something that was future, but a revelation of what was present, from which, in human terms, something could follow that was not yet there, although it would not follow because God had not decreed it. David asked about what was hidden from him to determine whether he should stay or flee. God revealed to him that Saul would come to Keilah and that the hearts of the Keilahites were not with him, and they were willing to deliver him to Saul when he came. Saul was already preparing for it, and the hearts of the Keilahites were already against him. God made this known to David, from which David could conclude what would happen in human terms and that fleeing would be best. God, who

determines the end, also determines the means to that end. If one wishes to apply this text to the outcome, then God's knowledge of the end, namely, the surrender, belongs to natural omniscience, to the knowledge of the individual intellect through which God knows the possibility of things, and not to an embellished middle knowledge drawn from human actions.

Objection 2.

2 Samuel 12:8. "And if it had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things." Psalm 81:14, 15. "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies." God foresaw how David and Israel would live and knew from that what would befall them or not befall them, even though He had not decreed it. So there must be a middle knowledge.

Response.

God has made voluntary promises of godliness. Those who live godly receive them; those who do not, do not receive them. God presents these promises as a means to motivate people, and people know and agree that it is their duty. However, the fulfillment depends on God's gracious gifts, which He gives according to His decree. David and Israel had not fulfilled the conditions; therefore, the promise was denied to them. God had decreed not to give more to David and not to deliver Israel from their enemies. God knew from His decree that they would not receive more blessings, but He did not know or decide this based on their behavior. God knows the outcome of all conditional promises from His decree, not from the use of human free will.

Objection 3.

2 Kings 13:19. "And the man of God was wroth with him and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it; whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice." The frequent striking of the ground was connected with the frequent striking of Syria. God knew one from the other, yet He had not decreed it.

Response.

There is no appearance of middle knowledge here. What connection was there between striking the ground and striking Syria? God had revealed to Elisha that Joash, the king of Israel, would smite the Syrians as many times as he struck the ground with arrows. He struck three times by God's guidance, who had decreed that Joash would smite the Syrians three times. The prophet, desiring the complete destruction of the Syrians, who were enemies of the people of God, became angry that Joash had not smitten them five or six times. Not because the outcome depended on striking the ground many times, but because the prophet, not knowing God's counsel and having only a general revelation that the Syrians would be struck, wished that he had struck more times and that the Syrians might be struck more than three times.

Objection 4.

Matthew 11:21. "If the mighty works, which were done in thee, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented."

Response.

This is an amplifying way of speaking that does not establish anything but merely elevates the matters being discussed. It is similar to saying, "If these were silent, the stones would cry out"

(Luke 19:40). In other words, they are not as hardened as you. God's omniscience knows the possibility of their repentance.

God's omniscience is a terror to the wicked. XXI. Know, O wicked, that if God knows everything, the past, present, and future, if everything is naked and open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do, then be afraid!

(a) God knows and sees your heart and its form, what is hidden within, and what may come forth; your thoughts and vain musings, your contemplations on sins, whether they be the set sins or fleeting ones from one moment to the next; your intentions, what you have in mind with each action, whether it is to exalt yourself and have your way or to harm your neighbor; your hatred and aversion toward your neighbor; your tumultuous outbursts of anger; your envy at your neighbor's good fortune; and, in a word, everything that goes on in your heart. Even if people do not see it and you pay no attention to it yourself, God sees it.

(b) God knows your lustful movements, your adulterous eyes, your impure words, your secret unchaste acts, your fornications, your adulteries, and all the lewdness you have engaged in.

(c) Your injustices, your deceptions with weights and measures, false measures, and all your schemes to take your neighbor's goods for yourself; fraudulent accounts, petty thefts, and other forms of stealing.

(d) Your backbiting, slander of your neighbor, character assassination, and the pleasure you take in speaking and hearing evil.

(e) He sees your pride, your vanity, your standing before the mirror, the satisfaction you find in yourself.

(f) Your dancing and joyful skipping, your gambling and playing with cards or dice.

(g) He knows your hypocrisy, both in religion and outside of it.

Know that: • God records everything, in a much neater way, as if someone were always with you, jotting down all your thoughts, words, and deeds, along with the date, month, hour, and place where they occurred. Just as there is a book of remembrance written before the Lord's face for the benefit of His chosen ones (Malachi 3:16), there is also a book of debts before the Lord's face, burdening the wicked. Take heed of this. • Understand that the books will one day be opened, and you will be judged according to everything written in those books (Revelation 20:12). Be assured that the Lord will present everything to you in an orderly manner (Psalm 50:21). • Consider it certain and sure that God, the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, who will by no means clear the guilty and whose judgment is true, will punish you for your sins (Psalm 7:12, 13; Psalm 50:21). He will not only pronounce the curse upon you that He has threatened against the transgressors of the law, and will say to you on the final day, "Depart, you cursed," but He will also condemn you to the lake of fire burning with brimstone for eternity if you do not repent promptly. You may not care now whether God sees you when people do not, but how will you tremble when the Lord Jesus, as Judge, comes for judgment, sets you before His judgment seat, and gazes upon you with eyes like flames of fire? How dreadful that day will be (Malachi 3:2)! But who can endure the day of His coming, and who can stand when He appears (Malachi 4:1)? For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven; and all the proud, yes, all who do

wickedly, will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, leaving them neither root nor branch. Therefore, repent before it's too late. Fear now the all-seeing eye of God, so that you may not be dismayed in that day before His fiery gaze.

And for the comfort of the godly.

XXII. But you, who take refuge in the Lord Jesus, who choose Him as your Advocate, receive Him by faith, and place all your hope and comfort in Him! You who fear the Lord and serve Him! The omniscience of God should be a source of comfort to you because:

(1) He knows your sincerity, that you hold fast to Him and strive to please Him. 2 Chronicles 16:9 - "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him." Proverbs 11:20 - "Those who are of a perverse heart are an abomination to the Lord, but the blameless in their ways are His delight." Psalm 37:18 - "The Lord knows the days of the upright."

(2) The Lord knows your secret acts of worship, your prayers, your supplications, your struggles in faith, your sighs, your tears, your adherence to Him, your reading, your meditation, your holy resolutions, your fear of God, and your godly walk. He saw the Ethiopian eunuch reading (Acts 8:28, 29). He saw Paul praying (Acts 9:11). Psalm 34:16 - "The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." Psalm 145:18 - "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth."

(3) The Lord knows your hidden struggles, your wrestling against unbelief, your sorrow for your sins, your sense of spiritual darkness,

and your feeling of distance from God, as well as all your soul's distresses. Psalm 38:10 - "My heart pants, my strength fails me; as for the light of my eyes, it also has gone from me." Isaiah 57:15 - "For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.'" Psalm 34:19 - "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all."

(4) The Lord sees your physical needs, adversities, poverty, and afflictions. He saw the widow's lack at Zarephath and provided for her (1 Kings 17). He saw another widow's need (2 Kings 4). He looked upon Hagar in her distress (Genesis 16:13). The Lord saw the oppression of Israel in Egypt (Exodus 3:7) - "And the Lord said: 'I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows.'" Psalm 56:9 - "When I cry out to You, then my enemies will turn back; this I know, because God is for me."

(5) The Lord knows your innocence when people falsely speak all kinds of evil against you and slander you. Take comfort in this: "Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God" (1 John 3:21). "For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience" (2 Corinthians 1:12). Oh, how comforting the omniscience of God is to the believers! For He not only knows their misery thoroughly, but He also looks upon them with compassion and is ready to help them in the time of favor.

And for the promotion of godliness. XXIII. If the Lord is all-knowing and watches every matter and deed closely, we must be stirred to various actions through this knowledge.

1. Be ashamed because the Lord has seen all your sinful forms and deeds, as Ezra did (Ezra 9:6). "O my God, I am too ashamed and humiliated to lift my face to You." Be like the tax collector who stood afar off, beat his chest, and would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven (Luke 18:13).
2. Guard against all pride and haughtiness of heart before God and people, and walk in all humility; for the Lord knows you, how contemptible and loathsome you are, and that you have nothing to boast of (1 Peter 5:5). "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."
3. Entrust all your concerns, whether desires or fears, into the Lord's hands (Psalm 10:14). You see them, for You observe trouble and grief, that You may take it into Your hands.
4. Continually confess your sins honestly and hide none, as Adam did; for the Lord knows them all anyway (Psalm 90:8). "You have set our iniquities before You; our secret sins in the light of Your countenance."
5. Fear the Lord and be alarmed when any sin begins to rise within you, for the Lord watches over you. How dreadful it would be to commit sin in the sight of God! Who would dare to commit adultery in the presence of others? Then how could one sin before the eyes of God? Such acts are recorded as the height of wickedness (Ezekiel 16:50). "And they raised their abominable practices before My eyes; therefore, I took them away as I saw fit." (Jeremiah 2:22). "For though you wash yourself with lye and use much soap, yet your iniquity is marked before Me."
6. Walk continually with the awareness that God sees you, and let this motivate you to live in righteousness and humility before His presence. This is what God requires (Genesis 17:1). "Walk before Me and be blameless." (Proverbs 3:6). "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Psalm 16:8). "I have set the Lord always before me."

The Will of God.

XXIV. The will of God also belongs to the communicable attributes of God.

The power to choose or reject, to love or hate, to be pleased or displeased is called the will. This is a special perfection in rational creatures and, therefore, infinitely present in God; God's will is the willing God. It is one in God, but the objects are diverse; therefore, we comprehend and distinguish them into the deciding and commanding will.

The Deciding Will of Good Pleasure.

By the deciding will, otherwise known as the will of good pleasure or the hidden will, we mean God's intention, God's good pleasure, which He intends to accomplish either by Himself or through others.

- Daniel 4:35: "He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth."
- Ephesians 1:5, 11: "Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will... In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will."
- Matthew 11:26: "Yes, Father, for this was Your good pleasure." God's good pleasure is accomplished irresistibly; He always gets His way.
- Psalm 115:3: "But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases."
- Romans 9:19: "You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?'" This pertains to the outcomes of events according to the plan that God has not

revealed to humanity, or not yet - often seen retrospectively. It is also sometimes revealed in specific matters through prophecies or signs in His Word. Examples of this are prophecies and the qualities as signs from which one can infer their salvation and be assured of it through the truthfulness of the promise.

The Commanding Will of God.

The commanding will is also referred to as the will of command, of decree, of sign, or the revealed will. It concerns the rule of life, the laws that God has made known to humanity and prescribed for them to regulate their actions accordingly. In as much as God has decided and it is His good pleasure to command this to humanity, it can also be called the will of decree and good pleasure. But, in terms of prescribing human duties, it belongs to the will of command, to the revealed will. Because God is holy, He takes pleasure, which means approval, satisfaction, in the fulfillment of His commands and displeasure, dissatisfaction, and aversion in the deviation from His commandments. God desires obedience; furthermore, God permits His commands to be violated to demonstrate His righteousness in punishment or to manifest His mercy in showing grace. God desires to give His Holy Spirit to His chosen ones, to remove the stony hearts from them and to make them walk in the commandments of the Lord and do His commandments. In this, God always achieves His purpose infallibly and irresistibly. However, humans do not always do what pleases God and what He has commanded as their duty. It may not always be done, but still, God achieves His purpose and good pleasure in commanding what He desires and also in executing the decree of His good pleasure.

Both the hidden and the revealed will are found together. Deuteronomy 29:29: "The secret things belong to the Lord our God,

but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law."

Paul speaks of the will of command.

- Ephesians 6:6: "Not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."
- Romans 12:2: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." See also:
- Psalm 143:10: "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God! Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground."

This is not a diversity in God's will but in the objects. When we distinguish God's will in this way, we do not posit two wills in God; the act of willing is one and undivided in God, but the objects are diverse. Nor do we suggest contradictory wills in God, as if God, with His revealed will, desired one thing and with His hidden will did not desire the same thing. This distinction of God's will, as hidden and revealed, pertains to the various matters, some of which are revealed and others not, but not to the same matter and in the same respect. For example, God commanded Abraham to sacrifice and kill his son Isaac, yet God did not will that Isaac should die, as was evident from the outcome. The command and the outcome concern different matters. The command was the revealed will, the will of command or sign, according to which Abraham had to act and do everything that contributed to the killing of his son, which he did. The outcome, that death would not follow Abraham's action, belongs to the hidden will of decree, which Abraham saw afterward when he was prevented by the voice of God. So, there is no need to be concerned about how to

align oneself, as the hidden will is for the Lord, and against it, no one can sin. God will carry out His own good pleasure. How one should behave confidently and submissively in light of the hidden will belongs to the revealed will, which serves as a rule for our actions; transgressing it is a sin.

The Will of God is Necessary and Voluntary.

XXV. The will of God can be considered as necessary or voluntary.

- Necessary, yet without compulsion; but voluntary, God wills Himself and loves Himself because God is love, 1 John 4:8. The Father loves the Son, John 5:20. God necessarily wills that everything He has decreed shall come to pass because He is unchangeable, Isaiah 46:10. "My counsel shall stand."
- Voluntary or spontaneous, by His own will, or indifferent, being able to will both to do and to leave undone a thing. Everything that God wills, He wills by His own pleasure, including what He necessarily wills. In God, there is also a voluntariness of indifference regarding many things. He could have chosen to create or not to create, to choose people or not to choose them. However, when God has decreed something, He wills it necessarily because He has decreed it. What was previously indifferent, God now wills necessarily, albeit through the voluntary spontaneity.

The will of God originates from God Himself and has no cause that comes from creatures. No creature can move God to will; even human goodness does not move God to will their well-being. Instead, human goodness originates from the will of God. God wills to sanctify someone, and through this, the person becomes holy. God does not choose anyone for salvation based on their good works; rather, He chooses them for good works.

The Divisions of the Will of God into Preceding and Subsequent; Ineffectual and Effectual; Absolute and Conditional Will...

XXVI. The Remonstrants and other proponents of good works, as causes of human salvation, and of election and reprobation, divide God's will into a preceding and subsequent will, into an ineffectual and effectual will, into an absolute and conditional will.

- The preceding will, according to them, is God's counsel regarding humanity, considered without and before His works, where God has chosen all people for salvation.
- The subsequent will of God, concerning humanity, considered with and after their works, where God has chosen believers and those who persevere in good works for salvation.
- The ineffectual will corresponds with the preceding will, and they understand it as the desire and inclination that is not followed and executed but is resisted and made ineffectual by human beings.
- The effectual will corresponds with the subsequent will and is considered powerful because, through their faith and good works, human beings enable God to grant them salvation.
- The absolute will of God is one that does not depend on any condition and considers humanity before and without their works, but it is rendered powerless and in vain by human beings.
- The conditional will of God is to promise such and such blessings under the condition of faith and obedience, a condition that is within the power of human free will to fulfill or not, thus obtaining or not obtaining the promised blessings. For example, without regard to human works, God decides to save all people, but foreseeing and taking into account their works, He decides not to save all people but only the believers. With a preceding

decision, God wants to establish Saul in the kingdom, but with a subsequent decision, He does not want to confirm Saul because of his wickedness but rather reject him. God wants to save Judas if he believes, but because he does not believe, He wants to condemn him.

These distinctions are inventions of humans against the Word of God and are full of absurdities. They accuse God of ignorance, powerlessness, and changeability. By establishing that God truly, seriously, and wholeheartedly decides to save all people and then changes His mind, it must happen either because He did not see it beforehand but sees it afterward, or because He could not truly, seriously, and wholeheartedly will it since He saw it beforehand but still changed His mind. None of these can be attributed to God.

- He is the only wise God, 1 Timothy 1:17.
- He is the Almighty, Isaiah 14:24, 27. The LORD of hosts has sworn, saying: "Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass, and as I have purposed, so it shall stand." For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?
- He is also the unchangeable One, in whom there is no variation or shadow of turning, James 1:17. He says of Himself: Malachi 3:6. "I am the LORD, I do not change." Isaiah 46:10. "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure." God is truth; everything God wills, He wills truly, seriously, and wholeheartedly. He is perfect, and far be it from the Lord to will something and not mean it, to will something and change it, to decide something and be deceived, or to will or not will, or not be able to execute, to will now and then not.

Various Expressions are Explained.

XXVIII. When the Lord says in 1 Samuel 13:13, "The LORD would now have established your kingdom over Israel forever," He indicates that many of His promises are made conditionally. If someone does not fulfill the condition, God knows this in advance, and He also knows when and to whom He will show His grace and give them the strength to fulfill the condition. The Lord did not confirm Saul in the kingdom because Saul was disobedient to God. Therefore, there are not two wills in God, one preceding and one subsequent (for God had decided to reject Saul and appoint David in his place), but one will to reject Saul for his sins.

When the Lord Jesus says in Matthew 13:37, "How often I wanted to gather your children... and you were not willing," this does not imply two wills in God, nor a powerless will. Instead, Christ speaks of His work, which He accomplished to the extent He desired, and of the opposition of the rulers of Jerusalem, who did not want to enter and hindered the people from entering.

When God is said to wish for something that does not happen, as in Deuteronomy 5:29, "Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me... so that it might be well with them and with their children forever!" or in Isaiah 48:18, "Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river," this is a human way of speaking. It cannot be said of the all-knowing, all-powerful, unchangeable, and perfectly complete God. It signifies God's displeasure with sin and His pleasure in holiness. Sins are the cause of withholding blessings from those who, according to His promise, would have received them for their godliness because promises are made on the condition of obedience, which God, according to His unchangeable purpose, grants to His chosen ones.

When God says in Ezekiel 18:23, "Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" says the Lord GOD, "and not that he should turn from his ways and live?" it does not indicate a powerless will in God but that God takes no pleasure in the destruction of people as His creatures. However, He does take pleasure in exercising His justice and in doing good to the godly.

How to Behave in Light of God's Decree of Pleasure

XXIX. So far, we have seen what the will of God is. Now, we will show how one should behave in light of God's will and how to use it. This is the foundation of tranquility and peace of mind in all circumstances, the basis, form, and most compelling reason for true holiness for a believer. I say for a believer who now accepts Christ for reconciliation and dedicates themselves to the service of the Lord. An unconverted person does not love the Lord and does not cherish the will of God but desires to do everything themselves and wishes everything, including God and all creation, to serve their own will. But believers know God, love Him, and, therefore, delight in the will of God. However, since everything in them is still small and in its infancy, they also need further guidance in this matter. Therefore, come, stand frequently in your meditation in the contemplation, acknowledgment, and love of God's will, and find your rest and godliness in it.

1. Regarding the Decree of God's Will Since God is the sovereign Lord over all His creatures, His will is sovereign over everything that befalls creatures and everything that is done or left undone by them. Therefore, acknowledge with your whole heart the omnipotence and absolute freedom of God's will with approval, pleasure, and joy, and say, "Amen, yes, Lord! Your will is sovereign, the first, the highest, the only one to which everything must conform. It is Yours to act

according to Your will with all Your creatures, with all people, with me and mine. I am glad that it is Your prerogative to do with the host of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth as You will, and no one can restrain Your hand or say, 'What have You done?' Your will is free, to make from the same lump of the human race a vessel for honor and another for dishonor, to demonstrate Your wrath and power on vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and to make known the riches of Your glory on vessels of mercy prepared for glory (Romans 9:21, 22, 23). Your will is sovereign to give kingdoms to whomever You will (Daniel 4:17), to incline the hearts of kings to all that You desire (Proverbs 21:1). You are free and have absolute power and right to exalt these and humble those, to fill these with joy and grant the desires of their hearts, and to overwhelm those with all kinds of adversities and sorrows, withholding the desire of their souls. I am glad that You need not give a reason to anyone for why You choose to act in such diverse ways. I am glad that You desire something beside other creatures and even me, and that a creature, even I, in everything that happens to me, can and should end only in Your will and find contentment therein. Even though it may be contrary to my natural inclinations, I will overcome them with Your will because You will it, and say, 'Not my will, but Yours be done.' I submit, and as I am, I willingly place myself in Your hand and submit to Your sovereign will. Your will be done completely over me, whether it is according to my desires or against them. I see in all the tumult of the world, in storms, in the breaking and sinking of ships, in floods over the earth, in the burning of cities, in the upheaval of regions by earthquakes, in devastating wars, in victories or defeats, in the oppression and persecution of Your church, in the poverty and trials of Your children—in all these, I see the execution of Your will. I worship it, I bow down, I remain silent, and I say, 'Amen, so be it, because the Lord wills it.' In the future, everything will also happen according to Your will; all the turmoil and striving of people, all their

plots and intentions will not result otherwise than according to Your will, which will govern everything. I acknowledge this, I desire it, I am content in all respects, both concerning everything and concerning myself in particular, not because there is nothing to be done about it, not because everything happens by an inevitable fate, not only and especially because I know that everything will turn out for the best for the church and for me, but primarily because it is Your sovereign will, and that is enough for me. Therefore, Amen, may it be done completely! I will be unconcerned about the future and will rejoice and be glad in prosperity or adversity. If it pleases the Lord, in order to make His will more clearly seen in the outcome of things, to use means, I will consider them all in advance and use them because God wills that I use them, but only as means and not as causes. I will not depend on them or expect the outcome from them. Instead, after the matter is finished, I will look back through all the means that served Your counsel to Your will and acknowledge that You have accomplished that matter, finding contentment in it. And if it pleases the Lord, in His goodness, to use me in carrying out His good pleasure, I willingly offer myself: Here I am, send me (Isaiah 6:8). Use me; I am willing to dedicate myself, my family, and what is mine to it. Let Your will be done completely in me and through me. In recognizing the sovereignty of God's will, a believer also has this, that whatever God wills will be to the glory of God's power, righteousness, and goodness. Angels and humans will see it and rejoice in the revelation of God's perfections, giving Him honor and glory, saying, "You, Lord, are worthy to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created" (Revelation 4:11). In this, a believer takes delight and pleasure and says all the more, "Your will be done!" Furthermore, a believer has the promise that everything God wills and does will ultimately be for the good of His church, the elect, and, in particular, for him, no matter how contradictory it may seem. They look

through everything to the promise, they believe it, embrace it, are satisfied with it, entrust it to His wisdom and goodness, and say, "Let the Lord's will be done!"

How One Should Behave in Relation to God's Commanding Will

XXX. 2. Concerning the commanding will, a believer acknowledges that everything God wills for him to do or not to do arises from the sovereign will of God, which is grounded in His holiness. For God cannot command anything contrary to His holy nature but commands people to do what aligns with His holiness. God created man not in the image of His will but of His holy nature and gave man a law that corresponded to that holy nature. However, regarding us, God's will is the standard of holiness. We need not seek the basis of obedience in what aligns with God's holy nature, but in what God has commanded us, and we need only to determine what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God (Romans 12:2). We must do everything as the will of God (Ephesians 6:6), doing the will of God from the heart.

If we also see in God's will how the command aligns with His holy nature, then in the foundation of obedience, we also have the obligation to imitate God, after whose image we were created and are being transformed, and to display His image in us. But if our understanding is too small to comprehend in every command how it aligns with the holy and righteous nature, which is, nevertheless, present in every command, God's will is our standard, and if we know it, we have enough to live by. Even if God's commandments did not flow from holiness and righteousness but solely from His majesty and free power to command, just as many particular and ceremonial commandments flow only from God's will and pleasure, God's will still binds all creatures. We need not inquire whether everything God

commands is right, for God's will makes it right and good. God says, "I will," and a believer says, "Amen."

(a) The commanding will of God is so sovereign and dear to believers that they consider all His commands as right. Psalm 119:128. They say of it, as Paul does in Romans 7:12, "Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good." The law of the Lord, because it is His will, is their joy, delight, and object of their love. Psalm 119:97. "Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day."

(b) A believer not only approves and loves the commanding will but offers their soul to the Lord to do His will, willingly submitting themselves to the will of God. God's will becomes their will, and their will merges into God's will.

(c) The soul is ready and willing to walk the path of the Lord's commandments. It takes pleasure in God's law according to the inner man and says with its whole heart, "I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:9).

(d) It keeps the will of God in mind in everything it does and refrains from doing, making everything align with it.

(e) God's will is not only its rule but also an impetus, a track that inspires it with zeal, sincerity, and perseverance to do God's pleasure.

(f) Although great reward comes from keeping the commandments, and it should and must lead to godliness, God's will is still the highest, most powerful, most beloved. Blessed is the one who regards and submits to the will of God in all circumstances, in prosperity and adversity, in their actions and abstentions.

XXXI. Various attributes of God are attributed to His will, such as: • Holiness, • Goodness, • Grace, • Love, • Mercy, • Patience, • Justice.

Holiness

Holiness is the purity of God's nature; the outcome, the radiance of all His perfections, in which regard He is called: Light, in Whom there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). So that in the human heart, a constant reverence and awe may dwell, the Lord continually presents Himself as holy.

- Exodus 15:11: "Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?"
- Psalm 99:3, 5, 9: "Let them praise your great and awesome name! Holy is he! Exalt the Lord our God; worship at his footstool! Holy is he!"
- Luke 1:49: "For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name."

The Lord is not only called holy, but He is holiness itself.

- Psalm 97:12: "Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name!"
- Psalm 89:36: "His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me."
- Psalm 105:3: "Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice!"

From the holy nature of God flows holiness in all His deeds. Deuteronomy 32:4: "The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he." From this comes the hatred and aversion to sin.

Habakkuk 1:13: "You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?" From this flows delight in holiness. Jeremiah 9:24: "But let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord." Proverbs 11:20: "Those of crooked heart are an abomination to the Lord, but those of blameless ways are his delight."

Goodness.

XXXII. Goodness is the opposite of harshness, cruelty, sullenness, unrelentingness, unkindness, benevolence, and God is far removed from these things. It is inappropriate to have such thoughts about God; they are sins in man himself. But the goodness of God is sweetness, benignity, kindness, amiability, benevolence, and liberality. God's Being is goodness, even if there were no creatures.

- 2 Chronicles 30:18: "The Lord, who is good, pardon everyone."
- Psalm 25:8: "Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way."
- Matthew 19:17: "And he said to him, 'Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.'"

From goodness flows kindness and the inclination to do good to His creatures. This is to the amazement of all who pay attention, which is why David exclaims twenty-six times in Psalm 136: "For his steadfast love endures forever." Psalm 62:12: "Steadfast love, O Lord, is yours." Psalm 25:10: "All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love."

From goodness and steadfast love flows doing good. Psalm 119:68: "You are good and do good." Psalm 86:4, 6, 5: "Make glad the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you."

This goodness is either general over all His creatures as far as they are His creatures. Psalm 145:9: "The Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made." Psalm 33:5: "He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord." Matthew 5:45: "For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."

Or it is special and particular towards His children. Psalm 73:1: "Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart." Lamentations 3:25: "The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him."

This goodness of God is the foundation upon which a believer, even after stumbling, repeatedly takes the liberty to turn back to the Lord. Hosea 3:5: "Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the Lord and to his goodness in the latter days." Psalm 13:6: "I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me."

Therefore, they call the Lord "the God of my steadfast love." Psalm 59:10, 17. Over this, they rejoice, in this, they boast. Psalm 89:2: "I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations." Psalm 106:1: "Praise the Lord! Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!"

Love.

XXXIII. Love is an essential attribute of God by which the Lord delights in what is good, desires it, and unites with it according to the nature of the object. The love of God, considered in itself, is God as the loving One, which is why the apostle John says, 1 John 4:8: "God is love." But considered in relation to objects, it is either:

- natural, in which way God loves Himself as the highest good. John 5:20: "For the Father loves the Son."
- voluntary, in which way God loves His creatures. In this aspect, it is either: (1) the love of benevolence and kindness, (2) the love of delight.

(1) The love of benevolence is either general, by which God loves, wills, sustains, and rules over all His creatures as creatures. Psalm 145:9: "The Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made." Or it is specific, by which God, from eternity, regards and appoints His chosen ones as objects of His special love and benevolence. See, for example, John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son." Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."

(2) The love of delight considers the elect as:

- viewed in Christ, clothed with His satisfaction and holiness, in which they are perfect. Colossians 2:10. See also Ephesians 1:4-6: "Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace."
- viewed as believing now, having the beginning of holiness within themselves. John 16:27: "For the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from

God." The love of benevolence precedes all good deeds of man; the love of delight accompanies man, now having goodness or doing it.

Grace.

XXXIV. Grace can be considered either as a perfection of God's nature without any relation or reference to an object, in which God was and would be such even if there were no creatures, that is, showing kindness to creatures without any merit, or it can be considered in relation to creatures, showing kindness without merit. The grace of God can mean either giving grace from grace or grace given from grace.

- Gratia gratis dans, giving grace from grace, is the perfection in God as the source from which God's blessings flow. Philippians 1:29: "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake." Romans 11:5, 6: "So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works." Romans 3:24: "And are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."
- Gratia gratis data, grace given from grace, refers to the received blessings themselves, whether ordinary blessings given to the unconverted, to which Jude refers in Jude 1:4: "For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality," or saving blessings, often referred to as gifts of grace, such as in Romans 5:15, 16; Romans 6:23; Romans 11:29. See, for instance, Romans 12:2: "By the grace given to me." 2 Corinthians 3:15: "To this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts." 1 Peter 2:19: "For this is a

gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly." Both giving grace from grace and grace given from grace are often combined in greetings, as in Romans 1:7: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father." 1 Corinthians 16:23: "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you."

Mercy.

XXXV. In humans, mercy is often accompanied by sorrow, pain, and compassion, but in God, it is not so. God is the merciful God Himself; it is an essential attribute through which God is inclined to come to the aid of a wretched creature. While mercy indeed has a wretched individual as its object, the wretchedness itself is not the cause of God's mercy but flows from God's goodness, which, when manifesting itself to a wretched person, is called mercy. When God revealed Himself to Moses, He called Himself merciful (Exodus 34:6). The Lord Jesus sets this as an example for us to follow (Luke 6:36): "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." God's mercy can be either:

- common or
- special.

Common mercy extends to all of God's works, including the unconverted. Psalm 145:9: "The Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made." The Lord Jesus had compassion on all kinds of miserable people (Matthew 14:14; Mark 6:34). Special mercy pertains to the elect, who are referred to as vessels of mercy (Romans 9:23). Just as this mercy proceeds from sheer voluntary choice (Romans 9:15: "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy"), it is also unfathomably great, not only in its extent from generation to generation (Luke 1:50), but also in the intensity of its movement. This is why it is presented with various emphases as "great mercy" (1

Peter 1:3: "According to his great mercy") and "rich in mercy" (Ephesians 2:4: "But God, being rich in mercy"). It is the mercy of mercies (2 Corinthians 1:3: "The Father of mercies and God of all comfort"). It is an inward movement of God's mercy (Luke 1:78: "Because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high").

Forbearance.

XXXVI. Forbearance, or Long-suffering. This is an essential attribute through which God does not immediately and completely pour out His wrath on the sinner but postpones punishment and, in the meantime, treats the sinner with kindness. God's nature is long-suffering (Exodus 34:6: "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness"). The Lord is long-suffering toward sinners in general (Romans 2:4: "Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?"). He has endured vessels of wrath with much long-suffering (Romans 9:22). God is long-suffering toward the elect before their conversion (2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance"). Under God's forbearance, the forgiveness of sins that were previously committed has taken place (Romans 3:25: "Whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins"). God is long-suffering toward His children, now being born again, not punishing them for their sins (proper punishments have no place here) but overlooking their stumbling and patiently enduring them (Malachi 3:17: "And they shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up

my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him"; Psalm 103:13: "As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him").

How to behave in light of these attributes of God.

XXXVII. Such is God, as we have presented Him to you in detail: God's nature is holy, benevolent, loving, gracious, merciful, and long-suffering.

You, who are convinced of your wretched state and desire reconciliation with God, should not be deterred from coming to Him, as long as you approach Him sincerely, with earnestness, and through the right way, which is only through Christ. Come, for the Lord is not unmerciful, cruel, or unforgiving. On the contrary, as He proclaims His name (Exodus 34:6), "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness!" He runs to meet all those who turn to Him from afar. He calls you, He comes to you Himself, and He promises not to cast out anyone who comes to Him. Therefore, do not stand still out of fear, but approach with boldness and come to the Lord and His goodness.

And to you, believers, what injustice do you do to the Lord when you view Him as cruel, unmerciful, and always wrathful when He does not immediately rescue you from impending troubles, does not grant your desires, or does not answer your prayers? You dishonor God with such thoughts; you entertain improper ideas about God. Humble yourselves over such sinful and dishonoring perceptions, cease from them, and be wary of them. And what harm you do to yourselves! You hinder your faith in prayer, deprive yourselves of quiet trust in God, hinder your love for God, and live in

estrangement from Him, in darkness, restlessness, and sin. Oh, do not act like this anymore; accustom yourselves to always consider God as we have described Him to you from His Word. Recognize Him as such, glorify Him in these perfections.

If you have sinned, if you are in difficulties, believe firmly and vividly that God's nature is as described. Humble yourselves before Him like little children, confidently approach God as such a God, and believe that He is not only such in His nature but that He is also with you in this way. Rejoice in this, trust yourself and your affairs fearlessly to Him, and you will find that it will bring you comfort, joy, intimate communion with Him, strength in faith, and growth in all sanctification. Then the holiness of God will not deter you but instill in you a childlike reverence, and you will desire to be holy because He is holy.

Justice.

XXXVIII. Justice can be considered either in itself, as the righteousness, perfection, and holiness of God's nature, or in relation to its effects upon creatures; then justice is to give to each what is due, whether through punishment or reward.

Justice can be either retributive or commutative.

- Among humans, commutative justice takes place, which is a repayment of value for what one receives according to an agreement. However, in God, this does not apply because none of our works, no matter how perfect they may be, inherently merit anything from God. This is because our works are not perfect, there is no proportionality between work and reward, God is always free, owing nothing to anyone, and humans cannot offer anything to God from themselves. All the good they

do comes from God, and they are naturally obligated to do it. Even after doing it, they have nothing to claim. Luke 17:10 says, "So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'"

Retributive justice is God's alone by right, both in rewarding and punishing. Everything God does is just. Deuteronomy 32:4 states, "The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he." It is justice when God acts according to His promises or threats. Psalm 51:6 says, "Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart." It is justice when God saves and justifies sinners. Romans 3:21-22 states, "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe." It is justice when God condemns sinners. Romans 2:5-6 states, "But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. He will render to each one according to his works." Psalm 119:137 adds, "Righteous are you, O Lord, and right are your rules."

The practice of punishment is usually called retributive justice, and this is naturally inherent in God.

XXXIX. Concerning retributive justice, the question arises: Does God punish sins because it pleases Him to do so, and He could refrain from punishing if He wished? Or does punishing sins stem from God's just nature so that He cannot fail to punish sins, meaning He cannot let sins go unpunished without acting unjustly against His holy and righteous nature?

The question is not whether God has the right and power to punish. That sins deserve punishment is known to human nature. Even the pagans understand that those who do such things deserve death (Romans 1:32).

The question is not whether God punishes sins out of necessity, as if the retributive justice of God is so natural that it is always actively punishing sins, like fire always burns. For God does everything voluntarily. He is also naturally just in the highest sense of the word. By voluntary, we mean not indifference or the ability to choose whether or not to punish, but a self-evidence whereby God, from His perfect, holy, and righteous nature, is inclined to punish sin and does so at the right time and in the right way.

But the question is whether justice, or punishment, is an act of righteousness, so that punishing sins cannot be omitted, and God cannot forgive sins without punishment because that would be unjust and contrary to His holy and righteous nature.

We answer yes, and it is evident:

- Genesis 18:25 asks, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"
- Psalm 7:12 declares, "God is a righteous judge."
- Psalm 5:6-7 states, "You destroy those who speak lies; the Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man."
- Nahum 1:2-3 proclaims, "The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord is avenging and wrathful; the Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies. The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty."

This matter will be discussed in detail in Chapter XVII, "On the Necessity of Satisfaction."

For the Alarm of the Ungodly.

XL. Tremble, sinner, whoever you may be, for God is just. Do not delude yourself into thinking that you can appease God by praying, "Have mercy on me, a sinner," or by striving to forsake evil and do good. Such delusions pave the broad path to eternal perdition, and millions of people are lost under the ministry of the gospel because of it. If you could be drawn away from this foolish delusion, there might still be hope of salvation. But as long as you content yourself with it, your state is hopeless. Listen, there is no hope of grace and salvation without satisfaction to the justice of God through bearing the penalty.

You have heard that God is merciful, and it is true. However, you misconstrue God's grace, understanding it as the pardon of sin and punishment without satisfaction. But that is not grace. God is not self-contradictory. God's justice necessarily demands punishment for the sinner, which cannot be violated in the slightest. God cannot deny Himself. Grace does not nullify justice; it does not oppose justice but upholds it. It is God's grace, which is so exalted in His Word, that God gives His Son as a Redeemer, who takes upon Himself the sins of the elect, bears the punishment deserved by their sins, and thus satisfies the justice of God in their place.

That is grace, that God offers Jesus as the Redeemer through the Gospel. That is grace, that God grants someone the faith to accept Jesus and entrust their soul to Him. That is grace when God converts someone and imparts spiritual life. That is grace when God lets someone feel His favor. That is grace when God sanctifies someone and leads them on the path of holiness to salvation. See how vastly

different God's grace is from the grace you imagine. Abandon your misconceptions, depart from the path of trying to make amends through prayer and repentance.

You might say, "Then all my hope is lost, and I would despair." I respond: What good is it to flatter yourself with false hope for a brief moment, only to be eternally lost? Be free from hope and despair in yourself. Believe and acknowledge God's justice, which cannot forgive sins without satisfaction through the bearing of the penalty. Stand before your sins, the justice of God, and your inability to satisfy it. Fear freely, tremble freely, but do not end there. Let the fear of the Lord move you to faith. Seek salvation through satisfying the justice of God, run to the Lord Jesus as the Redeemer, accept Him for justification and sanctification; that is the only way to be saved.

For the Comfort of the Godly.

And you, believers, who know this way, who approach God through it, behold the justice of God ever more deeply until you see its purity, glory, and loveliness. Glorify God for His justice; rejoice in the fact that God is just. Love justice as much as goodness and mercy, especially because it has been satisfied for you. Thank God that the Lord leads you and all His elect to salvation through such a holy way. Regard justice not as against you but for you, to grant you salvation and to punish your enemies according to their deserts.

Power.

XLI. We have divided the communicable attributes of God into three main categories: understanding, will, and power. We have discussed the first two; now, let's delve into power. The word "power" in our language is ambiguous. It can mean dominion, supreme authority,

and control, or it can refer to physical strength and might. When applied to God, it signifies His omnipotence.

Power in the first sense is called "exousia" in Greek and "potestas" in Latin, meaning the right to rule, authority, and supreme command. This can be considered either as an essential attribute or in relation to the dispensation of grace. God is the Lord and Owner of all His creatures, possessing absolute authority and control over everything because He is God, and all creatures depend on Him for their existence and actions.

This power is not subject to anyone's judgment; no one can demand an explanation from Him or say, "Why do You act this way? Is it fair?" Whether we understand the reason for God's actions or not, we must accept His sovereignty. Consider Job 9:12, "Who can say to Him, 'What are You doing?'" Job 33:13 states, "He does not answer for any of His doings." Nebuchadnezzar emphasizes this power in Daniel 4:35, "He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'" Or as in Matthew 20:15, "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I wish with My own things?" And Romans 9:20-21, "But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, 'Why have you made me like this?' Does not the potter have power over the clay?"

The economic or administrative power has been delegated by the Father to the Mediator Jesus Christ. He has not only given the Church and all the elect to Him for their salvation but has also placed all creatures in His hands to use for the benefit of the elect. However, this does not exclude the Father, as He accomplishes everything through the Son. See Matthew 28:18, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

Or strength, omnipotence.

XLII. God's power in the second sense, called "dunamis" in Greek and "potentia" in Latin, refers to the strength and might of God. Through this power, God can accomplish anything that does not contradict His nature, truth, the possibility of a creature, and what He wills. God can do more than He does or wills to do. He can generate children from the stones of Abraham (Matthew 3:9), meaning He can create humans, just as He formed the first man from a lump of clay. God could create thousands and thousands of worlds. In short, God's power is boundless. We may conceive many things that would contradict God's nature, truth, and the nature of creatures. We may ask about imagined things that can never exist as creatures. To apply these questions to God's omnipotence and ask, "Can God do this or that?" involves thoughts that lack reverence and godly fear.

Anything that contradicts God's nature, truth, and the nature of creatures should be far from the Almighty and holy God. Job 34:10 emphasizes this, "Far be it from God to do wickedness, and from the Almighty to commit iniquity." God cannot deny Himself. 2 Timothy 2:13 says, "He cannot deny Himself." God cannot lie or deceive. Titus 1:2 asserts, "God, who cannot lie." Hebrews 6:18 affirms, "It is impossible for God to lie." Even if from eternity there were an omnipotence in God to create a world, the world could not have existed from eternity. Yes and no are diametrically opposed to each other and cannot both be true at the same time. The same specific body or person cannot be present in many places that are far apart. All these things are beyond the scope of omnipotence. However, God's power can achieve whatever He wills and more than He wills. Whatever He can will, His hand is never shortened. Therefore, He is called the Almighty. Genesis 17:1 says, "I am God Almighty." Job

29:5 declares, "When the Almighty was yet with me." And 2 Corinthians 6:18 states, "Says the Lord Almighty."

The Lord does not require objects, means, or anything from creatures to accomplish His works.

- Romans 4:17, "He gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did."
- Psalm 33:9, "For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast."
- Jeremiah 32:17, "There is nothing too hard for You."
- Luke 1:37, "For with God nothing will be impossible." Whatever He wills, He executes irresistibly. Psalm 115:3 asserts, "Our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases." Isaiah 14:27 questions, "For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it?"

To the dismay of the wicked.

XLIII. Therefore, tremble, you wicked ones! For such an omnipotent God is against you. You cannot withstand Him; there is no refuge, no hiding place, and no one to protect you from Him or deliver you from His hand. It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31). Therefore, you shall wail, for the day of the Lord is near; it comes as a destruction from the Almighty (Isaiah 13:6).

And comfort for the godly.

And you, children of God? Strengthen your hearts with this omnipotence. If God is for you, who can be against you? If you need something for the body, even when you see no solution or means, God knows the way, and He needs no means. If He chooses to use

them, He creates and provides them. Small means are sufficient for Him because He is the Almighty. He brings light out of darkness so that His hand may be seen more clearly. Therefore, say with Abraham in your distress: "The Lord will provide." If you need light for your soul, comfort, a new heart, or strength against sin, even when you see no way, with a single word, He can grant you the desires of your soul. So, vividly envision the omnipotence of God in everything, and it will give you strength in all circumstances. It will shelter you from worry, fear, and dread. "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" (Psalm 91:1).

Walking with God as such is both allowed and required.

XLIV. Thus, we have presented to you God, His Being, and perfections. This is our God. He is the object of our religion. Therefore, it is the duty of all the religious to continually meditate upon God as such, to live in contemplation of Him, and to walk in His presence. Why?

1. This is what the Lord requires of His people. Genesis 17:1 says, "I am God Almighty; walk before Me and be blameless." Proverbs 3:6 advises, "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." Micah 6:8 clarifies, "He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to ... walk humbly with your God." Job 22:21 implores, "Now acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace."
2. This has been the constant practice of the saints who are set before us as examples, such as Enoch and Noah. Genesis 5:24 records, "And Enoch walked with God." Genesis 6:9 similarly states, "Noah walked with God." Moses, as in Hebrews 11:27, "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he

endured as seeing Him who is invisible." David, in Psalm 16:8, professes, "I have set the LORD always before me." Psalm 139:18 speaks, "When I awake, I am still with You." Asaph, in Psalm 73:23 and 28, says, "I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand. But it is good for me to draw near to God."

3. When God promises something great to His people, He promises that they will walk with Him, and He with them. Psalm 89:15-16 proclaims, "Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! They walk, O LORD, in the light of Your countenance." John 14:23 promises, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." 2 Corinthians 6:16 declares, "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

What Walking with God Entails.

XLV. This walking with God involves:

(a) A holy separation and withdrawal of the heart from all that is visible. 2 Corinthians 4:18 says, "While we do not look at the things which are seen." 2 Corinthians 6:17 instructs, "Therefore, come out from among them and be separate."

(b) A quiet turning towards God, preparing to be illuminated by that wondrous light. Psalm 5:4 expresses, "In the morning I will direct it to You, and I will look up." Psalm 62:2 states, "Truly my soul silently waits for God."

(c) Gazing upon the perfections of God to understand them more deeply and feel their power in the heart. Micah 7:7 declares, "I will watch for the LORD." Psalm 34:5 mentions, "They looked to Him." Moses held fast, "as seeing Him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27).

(d) Engaging with God in intimacy and humility—sometimes in silence, sometimes in reverence, sometimes in adoration, sometimes in bowing down, sometimes in dialogue, sometimes in prayer, sometimes in humble submission, sometimes in trust, sometimes in rejoicing and finding delight in the Lord, and sometimes offering oneself willingly to the service of the Lord to live a pleasing life before Him. This is the elevated life; this is walking with God. This is the hidden path where nothing but holiness and delight reside.

The Sweetness and Blessedness Enclosed in It.

XLVI. To fill you with joy in such a life, and to inspire you with great enthusiasm to embark on this journey and persevere, know that from walking with God flows deep self-humiliation—a disposition pleasing to God and delightful to you. This leads to steadfast and abundant consolation, true joy, and peace that surpasses all understanding, as well as pure sanctification.

- When the soul is admitted to contemplate God as her God in Jesus Christ, it perceives the righteousness of God. It esteems and loves it no less than His goodness and love. In it, the soul sees only light, purity, and glory. It rejoices in it all the more because, through the merits of Christ, it is not for her destruction but for her aid, her salvation, and the perdition of the wicked.
- The soul sees God's goodness and sufficiency. Tasting their power, she is so satisfied that all the goodness of creatures fades away. She can do without it all, and, like Asaph, she can say, "Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You; God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

- She is illuminated by God's love and ignites with reciprocal love. She dwells in love, falls silent in love, marvels at it, and finds so much in it that all creaturely love loses its strength. She sees no loveliness in creatures except to the extent that something of God is in them. Therefore, she desires no one's love, and she easily detaches herself from all that appears lovely on earth.
- She beholds God's holiness and, unable to endure its brilliance, veils her face and exclaims with the angels, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts!" Thus, she falls in love with holiness and desires to be holy as He who called her is holy.
- She perceives God's sovereign holy will, esteems it, loves it, and approves of it. She rejoices that this will is accomplished in all things, both in all creatures and in her. She submits herself to it, accepts it in all things, and finds it good and sweet. She loses her own will, which melts into God's will. The Lord's will is her will in suffering, as well as in action, and she is ready to do all things as the will and pleasure of the Lord.
- She contemplates the majesty and glory of God, so that every creature loses its majesty and glory. To her, everything else appears lowly, insignificant, and contemptible. She desires no majesty or glory in the world and is not afraid of anyone else's majesty if it should compel her to do or leave something against her God's will. She esteems the high and the glorious in this regard as little as the lowest and most despised, though she is entirely submissive to all whom God has placed over her because it is God's will. But she humbly bows before the high God, giving Him honor and glory. Her heart is prepared, her tongue is ready to proclaim the honor of the majesty of His glory.

- She contemplates the omnipotence of God within herself and working in all creatures. Thus, all the power of creatures, whether for or against her, vanishes. She relies on one and fears not the other. Seated in the shelter of the Most High, she rejoices over all her enemies, feels safe without fear, and trusts.
- She contemplates the manifold and inscrutable wisdom of God revealed in all His works, both in nature and grace. In doing so, she loses her own wisdom and considers it foolishness. The wisdom of all enemies and friends has also lost all respect. She remains quiet and content in God's wise governance, be it of the entire world, the Church, her country, or her own life. In peace and war, she trusts everything to God's wisdom, which knows the time and manner, even though she cannot foresee them in advance.
- She beholds God's infallible truth and faithfulness, so she does not rely on human promises. They do not make her joyful, and human threats do not frighten her. She knows human fickleness, but she knows the Lord as the God of truth and one who remains faithful throughout eternity. She knows the promises, believes them, and is so content with their certainty that it is as if they were already fulfilled. She rests in them, hopes for them with joy.

And the Strength for Holiness Within It.

XLVII. Behold, is this not a joyful life, a heaven on earth, to have such a God as your God, for your benefit and salvation? Can there be sadness in such a soul? Does it not immediately possess all grounds for consolation that God provides for the God of its rejoicing? Does such a walk with God not lead the soul to the deepest humility, meekness, and self-abasement? This gives rise to a thoughtful and

steadfast disposition in the soul; a quiet submission in all things with humility, a fearless courage and boldness in performing one's duty, even when the Lord calls to great things; contentment in the work done for the Lord, leaving the outcome in resignation to His providence. From this flows pure holiness. 2 Corinthians 3:18, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Any virtue that does not arise from such a representation and contemplation of God in Christ is not to be highly regarded, for it lacks the true form. But this view of God elevates the soul above the tumult of all creatures, unites the soul with God and His will, teaches her duty and how to perform it. Here are the most powerful and pure motives to spur her on to work, here the soul finds all sweetness and peace. Indeed, this brings heaven into the soul and the soul into heaven. Here, sinful desires are prevented from arising, or if they do, they are restrained. Here, the fear of God, love for God, submission to God, and obedience to God exist. Thus, the soul shines like the face of Moses after he had spent forty days with God on the mountain. Blessed is he whom You choose and cause to approach You, that he may dwell in Your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, of Your holy temple, Psalm 65:4-5. Oh, blessed eternity, in which one will always be with the Lord, seeing face to face, and knowing as one is known, 1 Corinthians 13:12.

How to Conduct Oneself in the Contemplation of God.

XLVIII. To behave well in the contemplation of God and thereby increase in the knowledge and love of God, the following things must be observed:

1. Imagine and maintain the state of mind that you are but a small creature; that the capacity of your soul is entirely small; that a matter quickly becomes too high for you to comprehend. Moreover, due to sin, our understanding is darkened, making us highly inadequate to grasp anything about God, who is a Spirit and infinite. Can a small bottle contain the entire sea? Then how shall the finite comprehend the Infinite? Can anyone gaze directly at the sun without being blinded? How, then, can anyone behold God, who is an infinite light, who dwells in unapproachable light, and who clothes Himself with light as with a garment? Let each person consider himself in this respect as a great, irrational beast and recognize that he lacks human understanding because he is so darkened by sin. Indeed, acknowledging that God is incomprehensible, agreeing with it, losing oneself in it, standing still in holy wonder, believing that the Lord infinitely surpasses the reach of our understanding, and rejoicing that God shows Himself to man, revealing something of Himself to be sufficient—this is the knowledge of God and the best disposition for increasing in knowledge.
2. Remain quiet in the contemplation of God, allowing yourself to be more illuminated by the divine light. Quietly follow this light with your thoughts, letting it work rather than exerting your mind to deduce one thing from another. For exertion and striving will make your thoughts more carnal than divine, leading the soul into darkness.
3. In this regard, it is necessary for the soul to simply accept what God reveals to it and guard against scrutinizing the "how." Do not ponder how God is eternal, infinite, omniscient, omnipotent, and all-working, for if the soul delves into this, it will inevitably become confused, and various temptations will arise. For the

intellect speculates about things that are beyond its grasp. Therefore, promptly reject any inclination to ponder the "how" or the manner. Also, reject the initial impulses of temptation. Flee from them by quickly sinking into your own smallness and darkness, and then begin again in all humility from the beginning.

4. To think properly of God, the soul must be in a godly disposition and emptied of sinful desires and worldly-mindedness. "The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him" (Psalm 25:14). "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21). "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him" (John 14:23).
5. Here, historical faith must be very active. Approach the Word; there you read what God says about Himself. Accept it as truth without arguing against it. Establish and say, "Such is God." Remain with your thoughts in God's Word and do not torment yourself by trying to ascend above it. Simply follow wherever the Lord chooses to lead you.
6. It is necessary to regard God as your God in Christ through faith when contemplating Him. "For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). God is dreadful outside of Christ and cannot be contemplated except as a consuming fire. But in Christ, there is boldness, and God reveals Himself to

those who draw near to Him through that way. Then one can endure the light of God's countenance better, rejoice in it, and glorify God. But one must be careful not to become too bold and irreverent when regarding God as Father in Christ and contemplating the perfections revealed in the way of the Covenant of Grace. To be humbly reverent, to tremble with awe before the Lord's majesty, is the proper contemplative disposition.

Chapter 4

Of the Divine Persons

The Holy Trinity.

Having spoken of the Name, essence, and attributes of God, we now turn to the deepest mystery of the Holy Trinity. This point of faith, which has been vigorously contested by those opposing the truth throughout all ages, has always been professed and defended by the Church as a pillar and foundation of truth. It has been defended against the Sabellians, Arians, and Valentinians of old, who, though differing in other points of belief, nevertheless concurred in opposing the Holy Trinity. Today, it is defended against the Socinians, Mennonites, Socinian Remonstrants, and other false doctrines.

Thanks be to the Lord, who has preserved the Church in this truth. The Church stands firm in this truth to this day, and, in spite of all opposition, God will keep it standing in it until the day of Christ.

In What Manner to Consider.

II. Before we proceed to discuss the matter, and before you engage in contemplating it, set these things vividly before you:

1. That God is incomprehensible in His essence and existence. We, as mere mortals, know only in part what God has chosen to reveal about Himself, which is sufficient to lead us to salvation. We understand only a fragment and the outermost edges of the matter. Believers do not seek to penetrate further with their understanding than their sphere and capacity allow, and the Lord sees fit to enlighten them. What they cannot fully comprehend and perceive, they believe and worship the Invisible One, who dwells in unapproachable light.
2. The entire written Word of God given to man speaks in human language, using words drawn from physical things. It is the marvelous wisdom, goodness, and omnipotence of God that man can understand spiritual matters through physical words. Such is the language, such are the words, even in the revelation of this mystery of the Holy Trinity. Therefore, one must be careful not to dwell on physical things from which the words are derived, lest one reduce divine matters to human ones. Instead, rise above physical matters and words with your thoughts, spiritually and in a manner befitting God, understanding what God says about Himself. Keep yourself in the disposition that we presented at the end of the previous chapter, paragraph 48. Read it attentively and apply it here.
3. The Holy Trinity is unknown to nature and is only revealed in Holy Scripture. Therefore, one should adhere solely to the Word, believe it simply, not surpass what is written, exclude all human reasoning, and avoid all comparisons invented from physical things. For these obscure the matter more than they illuminate

it and lead astray more than they lead to it. May the Lord sanctify and guide me in writing, and you in reading and hearing.

God is One Essence.

III. We firmly maintain and declare that there is only one God.

- Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear, O Israel! The LORD our God, the LORD is one!"
- 1 Corinthians 8:5, 6: "For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is one God."
- Galatians 3:20: "God is one."
- 1 Timothy 2:5: "For there is one God."

There can also be only one eternal, one Almighty, one All-Sufficient. Even the most enlightened heathens have acknowledged this. The wild heathens of our time, who do not even display external religion, acknowledge only one God. The recognition of many gods among the heathens seems to have originated from their knowledge of the existence of angels, and perhaps also from a misunderstanding of the Holy Trinity and the use of the plural name Elohim for God.

A Person is an intelligent being.

IV. The only God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the Divine Being has these three modes of existence, which are called persons, according to the Word of God (Hebrews 1:3), "The express image of His person." When the word "Hypostasis" is used of an intelligent being, it means a person. Thus, we understand a living, intelligent, indivisible, unsupported by another, not a part of another, self-existent being. Such are angels and humans, and therefore they are

called persons. When applied to the Divine essences, this term "persons" is used so that we, in our limited understanding, can grasp something of the incomprehensible, expressing it in a human way while understanding it in a Divine way.

A Divine Person can be considered either in the abstract, in the abstract sense, or concretely, in union with the Essence. For example, in Hebrews 1:3, "The express image of His person," the Person of Christ is said to be of His Divine nature and "morph Yeou en morphee Theou" in the form, that is, the essence, nature, and form of God. He was therefore equal to God. Just as the form of a servant includes a person, essence, and quality, the Word encompasses persons, essence, and qualities. How the qualities of God are referred to is explained in the previous chapter.

In the Divine Being, there are three Persons.

V. That one Divine Being exists in three Persons, not co-existing alongside each other but each proceeding from the other through generation or procession. That in this one Divine Being, there are three Persons is so clearly revealed in the Word of God that it cannot be denied. It is evident from the OLD TESTAMENT and the NEW TESTAMENT.

From the name Elohim.

1. (a) Elohim is in the plural, meaning not one, not two, but more than two. Since the Scriptures explicitly mention three, it is convincing evidence that it signifies three Persons who are the one God. In the singular (Eloah), it is rarely used, and it is never used in the dual, but almost always in the plural. Since we know that there is only one God, the use of the plural form in relation to the Divine Essence indicates the triunity of the Persons.

2. (b) Furthermore, with Elohim in the plural, a verb, adjective, or noun in the plural is often used in appellation, and it always has an affix in the plural number. See:

Genesis 1:26: "And Elohim (Gods) said, Let Us make man." Genesis: "When Elohim (Gods) Hitgnoe, caused them to err." Joshua 24:19: "Elohim Kedoshim, (Gods) are holy." Ecclesiastes 12:1: "Remember Kyarwb Boreecha, your Creators." Isaiah 54:5: "Bagnalaich Gnosaich, Your Makers are your Husbands." Exodus 20:2: "I am Jehovah Eloheka, your God."

It is noteworthy that Jehovah Elohim are often combined into a single word, Jehovah, and that these two words, Jehovah Elohim, are usually joined together. This indicates a unity of the Essence in three Persons. When the plural word Elohim God is used in the singular, it indicates that the Persons are one in essence, with no distinction between them in terms of their essence or from each other.

2. From texts in which God speaks of Himself as more than one and more than two. The triunity of the Persons is also evident in such places: (a) In which the Lord speaks of Himself as more than one and more than two.

- Genesis 1:26: "Let Us make man."
- Genesis 3:22: "The man has become like one of Us."
- Genesis 11:7: "Let Us confuse their language." This is not said of the angels because they are not creators, and humans are not made in the image of angels. Angels cannot be equated with God. When earthly kings say, "we" and "us," they are demonstrating their smallness, that they do not act alone but together with their council and people, "senatus populusque." But God is sovereign, and therefore God would not speak like this. However, His use of the plural when referring to Himself

signifies the triunity of the Persons, which is why He is also called the Creator, according to the Hebrew text in Ecclesiastes 12:1.

(b) Such places in which the Lord speaks of Himself as another. Genesis 19:24: "Then the LORD rained down sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven." One of the three angels who spoke with Abraham was the Son of God, Jehovah. The one who appeared here on earth rained down from the Lord out of heaven; Another caused the rain, Another from whom the rain came, and both are called Jehovah. Because God is one in essence and in this respect there is no other and no other, here the Son and the Father, the second and the first Person, are understood, for the Father works through the Son, and the Son works from the Father, John 5:19.

3. From texts in which He is said to be three, as in the OLD TESTAMENT... For further conviction of your soul, look with a believing heart at such places where God is expressly said to be three, not in essence but in Persons. In the blessing that the Lord commanded to be placed upon His people, JEHOVAH is repeated three times: Numbers 6:24, 25, 26: "The LORD bless you and keep you! The LORD make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you! The LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace!"

In the repetition of the word JEHOVAH, a work corresponding to each Person in the economy of the covenant of grace is added: as Father, preservation; as Son, grace; as Holy Spirit, peace. The apostle, wishing this blessing, mentions the three Persons, 2 Corinthians 13:13. A clear proof that the repetition of the word JEHOVAH is a reference to the three Persons. This threefold repetition is also found in Isaiah 6:3: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD."

This text is applied to the three Persons in the NEW TESTAMENT: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. See John 12:41; Acts 28:25. Add to this:

- Isaiah 61:1: "The SPIRIT of the LORD is upon Me."
- Isaiah 63:7, 9: "I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD... The ANGEL OF HIS PRESENCE saved them." (That this is the Son is evident from Malachi 3:1).
- Isaiah 63:10: "They rebelled and grieved His HOLY SPIRIT."
- Psalm 33:6: "By the WORD of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the BREATH of His mouth all their host."

... as in the NEW TESTAMENT. See it clearly in the NEW TESTAMENT:

- Matthew 3:16, 17: "And behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the SPIRIT OF GOD descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved SON.'"
- Matthew 28:19: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the NAME of the FATHER and of the SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT."
- 2 Corinthians 13:13: "The grace of the Lord JESUS CHRIST and the love of GOD and the fellowship of the HOLY SPIRIT be with you all."
- 1 John 5:7: "For there are three that testify: the FATHER, the WORD, and the HOLY SPIRIT, and these three are one."

Thus, we have seen that there are three Persons in the Divine Being, which will become even clearer when we show that each Person is the true God and that the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

- First, we will speak of the Deity of the Son and His eternal and incomprehensible generation.
- Then, we will speak of the Deity of the Holy Spirit and His procession.

Every Person of the Trinity is the true God.

VI. That the Father is the true God is not disputed and will be sufficiently proven in the following. That the second Person, the Son, is the true God is irrefutably proven from the Divine names, attributes, works, and honor.

1. The Divine Names. He is called JEHOVAH, a name that belongs solely to the true God, as shown above in paragraph 2. See Jeremiah 23:6; Romans 9:5; 1 John 5:20.
2. The Divine Attributes. He is eternal, almighty, all-knowing, and therefore the only true God. Now, the second Person, the Son, possesses these attributes. See Revelation 1:8; Micah 5:1; Revelation 2:13.
3. The Divine Works. He who created the world, sustains everything, raises the dead, is the true God. Now, the Son does all these things. See John 1:3; Colossians 1:16, 17; John 5:20, 21.
4. Divine Honor. He who is to be honored just as the Father, in whose name one must be baptized, whom one must worship, in whom one must believe, is the true God. Now, this honor is due to the Son. See John 5:23; Matthew 28:19; Philippians 2:10; Hebrews 1:6; John 14:1. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 18. That the Holy Spirit is the True God will be shown in paragraph 28 below.

The three Persons are neither of the essence, nor separated from each other. VII. These three Persons are neither of the essence, nor distinct or separate from each other, so that what would be different

from the Divine Essence and what would be a Divine Person would be different, and again, what would be the Father, what would be the Son, what would be the Holy Spirit. That would mean positing three, indeed four gods. There is indeed a distinction, but no diversity. Each Person is the same and the entire Divine Essence exists in this manner. Therefore, when the Scripture speaks of the Persons, it mentions three, and when it speaks of the Divine Essence common to the three Persons, it says that those three are One, 1 John 5:7.

But they are one. The Greek church used three words to express the unity and concurrence of the three Persons with each other, which we cannot express as emphatically in our language. We will attempt to come as close as we can.

Sameness of Essence.

The first word, homoousia, sameness of essence, which means that the same Divine Essence is common to the three Persons; one does not have a different essence than the other, but one and the same; the Son is the same Deity that the Father is, and the Holy Spirit is the same Deity as the Father and the Son. Heretics of old played with this word and used homoiousia, likeness of essence, wanting the Son and the Holy Spirit to have an essence that resembled the Father's essence but was not the same, as if, because there was only one letter difference in the word, there was also little difference in the matter. The three Persons possess the same Essence. John 10:30: "I and the Father are one."

- The Son was in morphe Theou, in the form, nature, and essence of God. Philippians 2:6.
- The second word, even-likewiseness, expressing that each Person possesses the same entire Divine Essence; the Essence is indivisible, each Person possesses it entirely, one not more than

the other. The three Persons possess the Divine Essence equally; in that respect, they are equal, with each Person possessing the whole indivisible Divine Essence.

- The third word is *emperichooreesis*, in-existence, indicating that, since God is simple and singular, without any diversity or composition, Essence and Person, as well as Person and Person, do not create any composition or composition because the three Persons, although distinct, are not different but exist in one another as the one simple God, the Father in the Son, the Son in the Father, the Holy Spirit in the Father and in the Son. John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 14:9, 10: "He who has seen Me has seen the Father. I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me; the Father who remains in Me."

Their Distinction VIII. The Persons, as mentioned, concurring, are nevertheless distinguished from the Essence and from each other, so that the Essence is neither one nor another Person, and one Person is not another. However, the internal, the natural distinction as it exists in God, is incomprehensible to us. We only see the outermost edges, as much as the Lord has been pleased to reveal to us in His Word, and the revealed is enough for us to wonder, to worship, to use holily, and to attain salvation. Certainly, an unconverted person knows little of this mystery; no matter how learned he may be. But a godly person, even if uneducated, knows, believes, and feels much more of this mystery than an unconverted person or one who contradicts it could believe, and more than he can express himself.

of the Essence. The Essence and the Persons are distinguished here: (a) The Essence is one, the Persons are three. (b) The Essence is considered absolutely without relation. The Persons have a relationship and relation to each other. (c) The same Essence is in

the three Persons, and entirely in each; but each Person exists through their own substance, so that the Essence is considered as communicable to the Persons, as has been said, and the Persons are incommunicable. This shows that the Essence and the Persons are distinguished, not substantially and essentially, but in terms of manner, as we speak of it.

From Each Other in Personal Properties. The Persons are distinguished from each other, not by a single concept of our understanding, nor in relation to the works of God, in which case God would be called Father when He works in one way, and Son when He works in another way, and Holy Spirit when He works in yet another way; nor that the three Persons would be collateral, side by side, going alongside each other without any relation to each other, so that the Son could be the Father and the Father could be the Holy Spirit, and the relationship and designation would only pertain to the work of redemption. But the distinction is in the nature of the Persons themselves. It is God's eternal nature to exist as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the Father cannot be the Son, and the Holy Spirit cannot be the Father.

In Names: In Order, In Mode of Existence; In Mode of Operation. Scripture presents the distinction:

(a) In personal properties as the foundation of the relationship or relation, and from this flows the distinction.

(b) In names, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

(c) In order, the first, second, and third Person.

(d) In mode of existence, the Father from Himself, the Son from the Father, and the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son.

(e) In mode of operation, the Father works from Himself, the Son from the Father, and the Holy Spirit from Both.

What the Personal Properties Are. The personal properties are these:

- To beget of the Father;
- To be begotten of the Son, and to send forth the Holy Spirit with the Father;
- To proceed from the Father and the Son of the Holy Spirit, whose manner is expressed by "proceeding" in the Scripture. Nowhere in the entire Bible are the three Persons named absolutely, without relation to each other, but always with relation, which indicates the designation Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, whether one Person alone, or two, or all three are mentioned in a text. If the relation is not expressed in one text, which only happens two or three times to our knowledge, that text is explained in other places with that relation, such as Numbers 6:25, 26, compared with 2 Corinthians 13:13, and Isaiah 6:3, compared with John 12:41, and Acts 28:25. To posit three bare Names or to posit these designations only in relation to the works of God in the dispensation of the Covenant of Grace is to deny the foundation of the holy Trinity at its core. To posit three coexistences or simultaneous existences without the mentioned relation to each other is to posit three Gods; therefore, it will be necessary to explain the foundation of the relation, the eternal generation, and procession a bit more broadly.

The Eternal Generation.

IX. The personal property of the first Person is to generate the second, and the personal property of the second Person is to be begotten in a manner consistent with God's perfect nature. This

manner can be best understood through the word "generate," which is why it is also expressed with that word in Holy Scripture. We should not reduce the eternal and incomprehensible generation to the human, but rather, leaving human thoughts behind, ascend to the Divine and thereby understand such a production of the second Person by the first Person, through which the first is Father and the second is Son. This is a truth known, believed, and defended by the Church throughout all ages.

Proven. We will demonstrate and confirm this eternal generation with two types of arguments.

1. The first argument we take from the designation,
2. The second from the foundation of the designation.

Argument 1. From the Designation: Father and Son. X. First argument. The all-wise God, who in His Word reveals Himself and the way of salvation to humanity with the clearest, most powerful, and fitting words, not only declares that He is three in Persons but also names the first Person Father and the second Son. See that:

- Matthew 28:19. In the name of the Father, and of the Son.
- John 5:20. The Father loves the Son.
- 2 John 1:3 From God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father.

Father and Son are words that inherently have a relation to each other in their nature, and when these words are heard, one immediately understands the relationship implied by them, without which one cannot grasp the meaning of the words. When one hears the word Father, one immediately understands someone who has begotten another in His own image. The word Son immediately brings to mind someone who has been begotten by another in their

image and nature, and one grasps the basis of the relationship that these two have with each other. Since God reveals Himself as Father and Son under these designations, and these words immediately convey such a relationship, and are understood as such by everyone, it is certain that the Father has begotten the Son, and the Son has been begotten by the Father, and that they have such a relationship. The angels, Adam, and believers are also called sons of God; this designation also immediately conveys the relationship that they have, namely, that they have been begotten in the image of God. The first two through creation, the latter through regeneration. But Christ's Sonship is of a different nature, one that cannot be compared to the others, in which regard the apostle says, Hebrews 1:5, "For to which of the angels did He ever say, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you?'" Christ is the Son by generation.

- He is called Exocheen, by excellence and elevation above all, the Son. Hebrews 1:1, 8.
- Furthermore, He is called the very Son of God, which excludes any ambiguity that one might imagine. Romans 8:32, "He who did not spare His own Son."
- To express it even more clearly, He is called the only begotten Son. John 1:14, "The glory as of the only begotten from the Father." John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son."
- He is also called the firstborn Son. Colossians 1:15, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation."
- And to remove all doubts, He is the firstborn Son in such a way that He is begotten from eternity. Proverbs 8:24, "I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water." From this, we conclude that He is the Son of the Father, infinitely different from angels and believers. This Son is by excellence, the very, the only begotten, the firstborn, the eternally begotten

Son of God, who, in His nature, has a relationship to the Father through an eternal generation. But the second Person is such; therefore, there exists a relationship between the first and second Person, the foundation of which is the eternal and incomprehensible generation.

XI. Although the presented argument is entirely convincing, the Socinians and others who let their corrupted understanding be their guide still seek if they could come up with something to obscure this truth. We will briefly present their objections and defend the truth against their quibbles.

Evasion 1. The words Father and Son are said of God in an improper manner, so we should not dwell on these improperly used expressions concerning God, nor draw from them any relationship of the Three Persons to Each Other.

Response. It is untrue that the words Father, Son, etc., are said of God improperly; they are said of God in the most emphatic and proper manner. The first Person is in the most powerful and proper manner the Father of the second Person, and the second Person is in the most powerful and proper manner the Son of the first Person. The foundation of this relationship, eternal generation, is a truth in God's nature in the most powerful and proper manner. However, the expressions are borrowed from human affairs, just as the entire Word of God presents spiritual matters through expressions taken from physical things so that we, as humans, can better understand them, knowing that what is said in a human manner must be understood in a divine manner. Now, no one would be so foolish as to want to understand everything in the Bible in an improper manner for that reason. Physical limbs such as eyes, ears, mouth, hands, and so on are attributed to God, as are human emotions and movements.

We now know that these limbs and emotions signify properties and actions in God, which are represented and carried out through those limbs and emotions. Who would say that these things are all improper in God? It is true that they are not human in God because they are spoken of in a human manner. Still, they are undoubtedly in God in the most powerful and proper manner. Similarly, here, Father, Son, generation, are words borrowed from human affairs and signify in the most powerful and proper manner that relationship and its foundation in God, in a manner consistent with His incomprehensible nature.

Evasion 2.

XII. The second Person is called Son because He is of the same essence as the Father.

Response.

(a) This is nowhere stated in the Bible, and therefore, as soon as it is stated, it is immediately rejected.

(b) Even if a son shares the same nature as the father, for otherwise, he would not be a son, the equality of natures with each other is not the ground and reason why someone is called a son. Otherwise, a father could be the son, and the son could be the father; then brothers would be fathers and sons of each other, and even people who are not closely related would be fathers and sons, as they all share the same human nature. This is obvious to everyone, showing that this evasion has no semblance of truth. A father is one who has begotten someone in his image, and a son is one who has been begotten in the image of the father. It is the same in this mystery. Equality of natures does not establish the relationship of Father and Son, but rather the act of generating and being begotten.

Evasion 3. XIII. The second Person is called Son because, according to the counsel of peace, He assumed human nature and was revealed in the flesh as the visible Image of the invisible God to accomplish the work of redemption.

Response.

(a) When one says the first and second Person, one establishes a relationship, and therefore, one cannot posit three coexistences, simultaneous existences, without a relationship to each other. And when one seeks and posits a foundation or reason why the second Person is called Son and the first Person is called Father, one acknowledges that these words, Father and Son, indicate a relationship to each other. Therefore, one cannot refute our proof from the related names of Father and Son, and one must agree that the Persons are not three Persons without a relationship but with relation and connection to each other as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The only difference that remains is the foundation and reason for that relationship, why the first Person is called Father and the second Person is called Son. Scripture speaks of generation and birth as the reason for this, but if one does not accept this, one cannot say that the revelation in the flesh, the assumption of human nature, is the foundation.

(b) Revealing Himself in the flesh cannot be the basis of Sonship. It does not make the second Person a God, nor the only begotten, own, firstborn Son of God. For He was already a Son; He was already the eternal Son of the eternal Father; He was already born from eternity, even before He was revealed in the flesh. See Proverbs 8:24: "When there were no depths I was brought forth." If He was already born as a Son, then He did not become a Son through His incarnation. Proverbs 30:4 also sheds light on this: "Who has established all the

ends of the earth? What is His name or His son's name? Surely you know!" If He was already a Son, then He did not become a Son through His incarnation. Consider also Galatians 4:4: "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman." If the Son was sent to assume human nature, then He must have already been the Son beforehand, and by assuming human nature, He could not have become the Son of God.

(c) The Holy Spirit has also revealed Himself in the world, descending like a dove in the baptism of Christ (Matthew 3:16) and in extraordinary outpourings, both on Pentecost and in subsequent extraordinary gifts. Now, no one would say that the Holy Spirit is therefore the Son of God. Thus, revealing oneself in the world cannot be the basis of Sonship. If one argues that the Holy Spirit did not become human, I reply that one must then abandon the idea of revealing as a basis for Sonship. One must simply say that one of the three Persons, who were indifferent to becoming Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, became the Son of God because He assumed human nature. Who would not reject such a statement? Does human nature confer Sonship? Is not Christ the Son of God from eternity? Is He not in the form of God? Is He not, according to His divine nature, the exact representation of the Father's substance?

Objection 1. XIV. In Scripture, "to bear" means the same as "to reveal." If being born makes someone a Son, then being revealed also makes someone a Son. Now, "bearing" is the same as "revealing," as can be seen in Proverbs 17:17, which says, "A brother is born in adversity." Proverbs 27:1 states, "You do not know what a day may bear." Song of Solomon 8:5 says, "She who bore you with labor has given birth to you."

Response.

(a) "Bearing" and "revealing" are not synonyms, words that sound alike and mean the same thing, which can be reversed. One cannot say that everything that is revealed is born, and everything that is born is revealed; that would lead to the most absurd consequences in the world. To derive the same thing from two words, these words must be treated and reversed in the same way. Since these words are not the same, such a conclusion cannot be drawn from them as has been suggested.

(b) Just because a word is used figuratively or by analogy in one place does not mean that it must always be taken figuratively in all places. In this subject under discussion, "bearing" and "revealing" are never used interchangeably; "revealing" never means "bearing." Therefore, this evasion is powerless.

(c) If "being revealed" is expressed by "bearing," then what reveals is never called Father, and what is revealed is never called Son. Therefore, this evasion is irrelevant because it attempts to prove that Christ is called Son because He was revealed, but it does not establish this by showing that someone is called a father because he has revealed, or that someone is called a son because he has been revealed. Only then could one address the question of whether Christ is a Son because He was revealed in the flesh.

(d) Regarding the texts mentioned: Proverbs 17:17 does not suggest that adversity is the father of someone who behaves like a brother, nor is adversity the son of someone who experiences it. The meaning is that a faithful friend loves not only in prosperity but especially in adversity; one who behaves like a friend in prosperity also behaves like a brother in adversity. Proverbs 27:1 means: "You do not know what you will encounter on the day." What one encounters is not the son of the day, and the day is not the father of what happens. The day

indicates only the time, not the cause. Song of Solomon 8:5 is not relevant here because "bearing" does not mean "revealing" but rather "bringing forth." The church, as a mother, and the teachers labor in order for Christ to take shape in the hearts of people, which happens through the preaching of the gospel. That is why the church is also called "mother" (Galatians 4:26). Faithful teachers are called fathers of those who have been converted through their ministry (1 Corinthians 4:15). Believers are called children of the church and of the teachers through whose ministry they have been converted (Zechariah 9:9, Luke 13:34, Philemon 1:10). Therefore, concerning spiritual begetting and spiritual bearing, the church is a mother, and believers are children of the Church. This passage speaks against those who bring them forth, for it says that bearing, generating, and bringing forth are the foundation of the relationship between mother and children, father and sons.

Objection 2.

XV. The third Person is not named because of a personal emanation from the Father and the Son, but because of the divine economy in the execution of the work of redemption, in which He revealed and demonstrated His divinity in time. Otherwise, one could not distinguish the Person of the first and second by the name of the Holy Spirit because, with respect to the divine being, they are both a Spirit and a Holy Spirit. John 4:24; Isaiah 6:3; John 8:12, 39-41; Acts 28:25; Romans 1:4; 1 Corinthians 15:45; Hebrews 9:14. Therefore, if the third Person is called the Holy Spirit only because He revealed Himself as God in the dispensation of grace, then the second Person also bears the name Son because He was revealed in the flesh.

Response.

(a) The consequence is denied. There is no connection at all because things are said of each Person that cannot be said of the others—being born, being sent—these cannot be said of the Father, nor can being born be said of the Holy Spirit or the Son.

(b) It is also denied that the first or second Person is the Holy Spirit; nowhere, not even in the passages cited, is the Father or the Son called the Holy Spirit. It is true that God is a Spirit, and each Person is holy, but in combination, it never happens.

(c) When God is called a Spirit, it is to be understood negatively, in a denying sense. It means such a Being that is infinitely distinct from all creatures in singularity, incorporeality, and invisibility—something that cannot be better expressed to us humans than by the word Spirit. However, the third Person is called the Holy Spirit because of the manner of His procession from the Father and the Son, which can be conveyed to us no better than by a term implying emanation. That is why He is called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of His mouth, and that even without any relation to the work of redemption. See:

- Genesis 1:2 - "The Spirit of God moved upon the waters."
- Job 33:4 - "The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty has given me life."
- Psalm 33:6 - "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth."

These texts show that the third Person is distinguished from the first and second in that He is a Spirit, even though the first and second Person are holy, and the third is the Holy Spirit. See Matthew 28:19; 1 John 5:7. And when He works outwardly, He works according to His nature through blowing. John 3:8; John 20:22. This refers to His

action and not to His relation with the Father and the Son or to the ground of that relationship, which is emanation.

Objection 4.

XVI. Son and Word, Son and King of Israel, are interchanged and taken to mean one and the same. Now it is known that Word and King of Israel pertain to the execution of the Mediator's office, not to the mode of existence. Thus, the word Son also pertains to the Mediator's office, not to the mode of existence.

Response.

It is entirely denied that Son and King of Israel, Word and Son are one and the same. They are indeed said of the same Person, but that does not mean they are one and the same; therefore, there is no consequence from one to the other. Many things are said of Christ, and accordingly, He bears various names, such as Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace, Father of Eternity, Immanuel, the Lord our Righteousness. Who would say that all these designations are one and the same because they are said of the same Person? Or does the name King of Israel pertain to the Mediator's office? From that, it does not follow that the name Son also pertains to it, and even less that He is called Son because of the Mediator's office. Christ is not called the Word with the Greek word "rheema" but with the word "LOGOS," which signifies speech, understanding, and wisdom. Christ is the eternal and supreme Wisdom, who has been begotten from eternity, which the Lord possessed in the beginning of His way before His works. Proverbs 8:22, etc. And although Christ is called the Word because of the revelation of the Gospel, this is not the reason for His Sonship or the name Son but a work of the Son, working according to His mode of existence.

Objection 5.

XVII. The name Son means the whole Person of the Mediator, consisting of divine and human nature, and acting in the office of Mediator according to both natures, not His divinity alone. Indeed, Son of Man also means the whole Person of the Mediator, not His human nature alone. Therefore, He is called Son not because of an eternal generation, but He is truly God's Son, firstborn, only-begotten Son of God, Sprout, Rising from on High, the Image of the invisible God, because of His marvelous incarnation, words, miracles, ascension to heaven, outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and entire rule.

Response.

(a) This is the old saying of the Socinians, and it is strange that those who do not want to be Socinian must resort to Socinian arguments. Such prejudices carry people away. If one does not agree with them, why then argue with reasons that can only lead to the suspicion that they are fundamentally in agreement or will have to be?

(b) Divinity is the whole Person; the human nature is neither the Person nor a part of the Person but is only assumed in the Person of the Son of God. The second Person was already the Son of the eternal Father before assuming the human nature, as proven above. Therefore, He is not the Son of God because of the miraculous conception, etc. All these are proofs that He is the Son of God, but they are not the ground and the reason why He is called and is the Son of God, as the apostle expresses it: Romans 1:4. "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

(c) In Christ, there are two natures, divine and human; the names, attributes, and operations of both natures are ascribed to the same Person, which belong to that Person, some according to His divine nature, and some according to His human nature. Thus, in Luke 1:32, Christ is called the Son of the Highest and the Son of David—the former according to His divine nature, the latter according to His human nature. The eternal Son of the eternal Father assumed the human nature. If the Son of God has assumed the human nature, then surely He was already the Son of God beforehand and did not become the Son because He assumed the human nature. Because He is the Son of Man, He is not the Son of God, and because He is the Son of God, He is not called the Son of Man. These words are not indifferent; Son of God and Son of Man are not one and the same, although they are said of one and the same Person. He is the Son of God according to His divine nature alone because of the eternal generation, as proven, and He is the Son of Man according to His human nature alone because He was born of a woman's seed.

Objection 6.

XVIII Matthew 3:17. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matthew 17:5 adds: "Listen to Him." Here, it speaks of the entire Person of the Mediator, God and Man, in whom God the Father has His pleasure, both in Him and His offering. He must be heard and obeyed as Prophet and King. This Person, as such, is called and is the Son of God.

Response.

We gladly concede all of this, but it does not touch upon the difference. The difference lies in whether the second Person of the Godhead is called the Son of God because God loves Him as God and Man, as Mediator, and is pleased with His offering, and whether He

must be obeyed as Prophet and King. This is what we deny. The text is no proof at all; it does not say a word about the grounds and reasons why Christ is called the Son but only that the Father calls Him Son, and He is called Son because He was the eternal Son of the eternal Father through eternal generation. The words "Listen to Him" do not say that Christ is the Son of God for that reason; that is too far-fetched. Also, the ground for obedience to Him is not His human nature, nor His Mediatorial office, but only His divinity, by which He alone is the Son of God, even though united with human nature.

Objection 7.

XIX. The primary purpose for which the name Son of God is often given to Christ in Scripture is to teach that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in His name (John 20:31). So, to want to conclude from the fact that He is often called the Son of God that He was actually born is in vain.

Response.

That's a strong argument! The purpose of the Scripture in calling Christ the Son of God is to teach that Jesus is the Christ, etc. If it said that Jesus is the Son of God because He assumed human nature, it might have some resemblance, but now it only says that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, whose Sonship is grounded in eternal generation, not the incarnation, as proven above. Therefore, it is not in vain, but certainly and irrefutably concluded from the designation of Son, only-begotten Son, His own Son, firstborn Son of God, that He is born not in a bodily manner but genuinely in a way consistent with God's nature. He is the eternal Son of the eternal Father; that's why He is often called the Son of God in Scripture. Even if it were found only once in the Bible, it would be enough for us to believe that

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, we will have eternal life in His name. The repeated reiteration should convince, terrify, and deter the objectors from contradicting.

Proof 5. From texts that reveal generation. XX. Up to this point, we have proven from the titles Son, My Son, Own Son, Begotten, Only-Begotten, Firstborn Son that the second Person had from eternity an aspect and relation to the first Person as Son and Father and that He is the eternal Son of the eternal Father. Now, we move on to the second proof, taken from the foundation of this relationship, the reason and ground by which and why the second Person is the eternal Son, which the Scripture states to be eternal generation. We will demonstrate this from various passages of Holy Scripture, presenting each one individually and purifying it from objections.

A. Psalm 2:7. "You are My Son, today I have begotten You." The first Person speaks here to the second, calling Him His Son, which implies that the first is the Father of the second. Here, the foundation is laid for why the first Person is the Father and the second is the Son, in these words: "I have begotten You." It is then clear that the second Person is not called Son simply because He shares the same essence with the first without further relation, as discussed in Objection 2. Furthermore, it is certain from this that the second Person is not the Son, and the first Person is not the Father because the second Person assumed human nature: because the first Person did not beget the second in this way; He already was the second Person beforehand, and the second Person was already, yes, from eternity the Son. See above in Objection 3. In the incarnation, the human nature of Christ was formed, not the Divine nature. So, in that case, the human nature, not the Divine, would be the Son of God, and to generate would mean not to produce a Person in His image but a nature infinitely different from the nature of the Father,

which is absurd. It is also clear from this text that these two propositions cannot be merged: that the second Person is the Son because He shares the same essence with the First or that He is the Son because He assumed human nature; these are contradictory propositions, and one cannot make one truth out of two falsehoods. This text speaks of the First and Second Persons and states that there is a relationship of Father and Son between them, and the foundation of this relationship is stated to be generation. One makes the first a Father, just as the second is a Son, and it makes the second Person a Son, just as the first is a Father. People often have in their mouths the words of Paul in 1 Timothy 3:16, "God was manifested in the flesh," and they want to quietly pass it off as if it meant the same as "Son of God." But they dare not explain those words and apply them to their view because it would be unclear. For "God was manifested in the flesh" does not mean "Son of God," but it says that He, who was God from eternity, assumed the human nature in the unity of His Person, without the slightest expression of the relationship between the Father and the Son, and of the ground of that relationship, which the text clearly states to be generation. Why do they not use the words of Paul? Galatians 4:4, "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman." There, the relationship is expressed, and it speaks of the Divine and human nature of Christ and the incarnation. But one can see that this text goes further than they want it to, that it indicates that Christ was already the Son before He was sent and was born of a woman and that He did not become the Son through the adoption of the human nature.

The second Person is then the Son because He is begotten of the first. Here we must ascend from the human to the Divine and consider it in a manner suitable to God and incomprehensible to us, believing that the first Person has begotten the second in a way that is most clearly expressed as generation. Let the thought of what takes place

in the human realm be far removed from here. Here, there is no time of first or last; there is no transition from non-being to being; there is no dependence, but there is eternity, there is equality, there is existence and subsistence. The existence of the Son from the Father is in God's nature and belongs to the perfection of His Being and Persons.

Objection

XXI By generation, we do not mean eternal generation here but the incarnation, for this generation would take place at a certain time, namely today, which never means eternity. Answer

(a) The incarnation is never called generation, and generation cannot mean becoming human here. For then, the first Person would be the Father and be called the Father of the human nature, and the human nature would be the Son of the first Person, the Image of God, the expressed Image of the Father's substance, which is absurd and immediately repulsive.

(b) The generation mentioned here is from eternity, by which the first Person is the Father of the second, and the second is the Son of the first because the second has been the Son from eternity, born before the creation of the world, Proverbs 8:24, before which there is nothing but eternity; His goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Micah 5:1 If the second Person, who is called the Son here, is the Son from eternity, then the generation is also from eternity, and furthermore, if the generation is from eternity, then the word today also means eternity.

(c) It is said that it does not mean eternity anywhere. I answer that generation never means assuming human nature, and yet they want to understand it that way here. Let it be shown that today cannot

mean eternity, just as I have shown that generation cannot mean assuming human nature. Although today does not mean eternity anywhere else, if it means eternity only in this one place, it is enough. Yes, I admit that when today is said of people, it means a certain time because people exist in time, but when today is said of God, who is not bound by time, it must be understood according to the nature of God, in whom everything is present at once, and for whom a thousand years are as a day that is past. Psalm 90:4 With God, there is an everlasting today. This Son, generated from eternity, is ordained and sent to be King over Zion; the heathen are given to Him as an inheritance; this Son will rule the Lord's people and punish the enemies; this Son must be honored, feared, and kissed with humility and love. Because He was the Son, all these things were ascribed to Him, but He did not become a Son because He received these things.

XXII. B. Proverbs 8:22-25. The LORD possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth. That by the Lord, the first Person, and by the word I, Me, the second Person, who in this chapter is called Wisdom, is meant, is beyond dispute, therefore there's no need to prove it. The second Person speaks of the First, that He possessed Him, and He says of Himself that He was anointed, that He was born. It is undisputed that there was a relationship or connection between them; the basis of the relationship was peculiar to the Father and the Son, to be by birth. The Lord possessed Me, Hebr., *canani*, possessed Me. This does not mean to ordain, neither here nor elsewhere, but it always means to have something as property, to possess something as one's own, to obtain, to buy, to get, to acquire. From this comes the word "possess." The first Person is said here to

possess the Second, to have Him as His property. This ownership was from eternity, in the beginning of His way, before His works. The question now is, in what way did the first Person possess the Second? The text itself answers it with the word, "I was brought forth." The ownership was through birth, for which reason the second Person is called the only begotten Son of God, the firstborn Son, the firstborn Son, just as this word "kana," to obtain by birth, means. Genesis 4:1. When Eve had borne Cain, she said, "I have obtained a man from the Lord." The first Person possessed the Second by birth. The Second says, "I was brought forth," and not in time; but the text explicitly says, "before His works," when there were no depths, etc. This is convincing and incontrovertible. It cannot be said that to be born means the same as to be revealed in the flesh; for the birth was from eternity, and the revelation in the flesh was about four thousand years after the creation. It cannot be said either that to possess and to be born means to ordain; for these words do not mean that in their nature or by their use. Besides, ordaining does not give ownership but presupposes ownership. If someone is to be ordained to a position, one must first have ownership of that person. The second Person, possessed by the Father from eternity by birth, is said to have been anointed from eternity, that is, ordained to the office of Mediator in the counsel of peace, in which each Person has regard to the ordination of the Son according to His nature, manner of existence, and mode of operation. Each Person has regard to the ordination of the Son and the work of redemption by Him. The Scripture, speaking of these or no matters, often intermingles the work of redemption in between, and it is known that not everything in that chapter should be drawn to the work of redemption, but those things spoken without regard to it should also be understood without that relation. So here as well; here, it speaks of the relationship and connection between the first and the second Person, whose basis is said to be birth. The Holy Spirit adds in what sense the Persons have

a relationship to each other and to the work of redemption through such a foundation, namely, that the first Person, possessing the Second by birth, anointed the Second, that is, ordained Him to be the Surety and Mediator.

XXIII. C. Micah 5:1. "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." That this speaks of the Lord Jesus is unquestionable, as seen in Matthew 2:6. Two goings forth or comings forth are attributed to Him: one from Bethlehem through His birth from Mary in His human nature, and the other from of old and from everlasting in His divine nature. In Hebrew, both goings forth are expressed by the same word "yatsa," which means to go out by birth, as in Genesis 46:26, "All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives." Similar usage can be found in Genesis 15:4, Genesis 17:6, Genesis 35:11, and many other verses. It is especially said of the Messiah in 2 Samuel 7:12, Isaiah 11:1, and other places. Just as the Messiah, in His human nature, came forth in time through birth in Bethlehem from Mary, so His going forth through birth in His divine nature is from eternity. The same word in the same context carries the same meaning.

The only distinction here is that the eternal goings forth are presented in the plural, which, according to Hebrew style, signifies a going forth par excellence, surpassing all others. Just as the eternal birth of the Son is incomparable and incomprehensible. Here, we cannot argue for coexistence, for the Incarnation, or for ordination because this is a going forth, a coming forth by birth, a coming forth from eternity, an immediate coming forth. Thus, it remains unshakable that the Son was eternally generated by the Father.

XXIV. D. John 5:26. "For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself." This passage speaks of the first and second Persons of the Divine Being. One is called Father, and the other Son, and they are in relation to each other. The Father is said to have life in Himself. Life is self-sufficient activity, a singular active power. The Father has this life in Himself; He has not received it from anyone; He Himself is the source of that life, just as He is self-existent. He is often referred to as the living God in the Scriptures.

The Son is also said to have life in Himself. He possesses the same life, not a different one, not one like it, but the very same life, the same self-sufficient activity, the same singular active power. Just as the Father has it in Himself, so does the Son have it in Himself. They are equal; the same life exists in both. But the difference lies in the manner: the Father, having life in Himself, has granted the Son to have life in Himself in a manner consistent with God's eternal nature, without time, without a transition from nothing to something. This demonstrates that the Son derives His existence from the Father and that this is the basis of being Father and Son.

Evasion

Life here is not considered subjectively as it exists in God but causally, as God bestows blessed life upon the elect. The Father can save whom He wills, and He has given the Son, as Mediator, both God and man, the power to grant spiritual and blessed life to whomever He wills. That it must be understood in this way is evident from the context.

Response:

(a) It is first certain that the life in the Son cannot be understood differently than the life in the Father; in this, they are alike, for both possess the same life and both have it in themselves.

(b) The Son is the Mediator and has assumed human nature. He who is the Mediator has life in Himself; this is a certain truth. However, we entirely deny that Christ, as the Mediator, has received life in Himself from the Father, either for being the Mediator or because He is the Mediator.

(c) If the first and second Persons of the Godhead are coexistences, existing together without relation to one another, then one might say that one Person has life in Himself just as the other does. When the second Person assumed human nature, He still had life in Himself. Therefore, He could not have received life in Himself as the Mediator from anyone because He already possessed it. Just as the Father has life in Himself, so does the Son. They both have the same life and have it in themselves. If the Father has it, the Son has it, and if the Father does not have it, neither does the Son.

(d) If anyone is to be a cause of life in another, he must first have life subjectively within himself. The consequences reveal the nature of the cause. Therefore, if the Father makes alive, and the Son makes alive, then both of them have life in themselves. This is the strength of Christ's argument in this chapter. Christ demonstrates that the Father has life in Himself because He gives physical and spiritual life to others. He also shows that because He imparts physical and spiritual life to others, He also has life in Himself. Christ further explains that as God, life in Himself was given to Him by the Father, enabling Him, as the Son, to fulfill the role of Mediator and be sent to accomplish the work of redemption, allowing the Father, Himself, and the Holy Spirit to grant life to dead and deserving sinners.

XXV. E. Hebrews 1:3. "Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person." In this chapter, the apostle is demonstrating the divinity of Christ, showing that He is the Son of God in an infinitely more glorious way than even the most glorious creatures, the angels. To whom has He ever said, "You are My Son"? He has indeed called them sons of God, just as the regenerated are called, but none of them are sons by generation. Only He is the Son by generation, as in verse 5: "You are My Son, today I have begotten You." This is also conveyed by the two expressions: "brightness of His glory" and "express image of His person."

This can only be said of someone who is a Son by nature. It is not His human nature, for between it and God, the first Person, there is no resemblance, as previously shown. It is not His divine nature either, for considering Him as a Person in His own right, existing without relation and without generation, it follows that the second Person, united with the human nature, is also not a Son by generation because it is not present in either of them. This would lead to the conclusion that the second Person, revealing Himself in the flesh, is a reflection of His own glory and an exact image of His own person when manifested in the world. However, the Son is indeed the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of the Father's person. To be an express image of the Father is to be the Son by nature, through eternal generation, in which context the Lord Jesus is called "the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4) and "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15).

Thus, we have expounded this great mystery that God has revealed in His Word, which has always been known, recognized, believed, confessed, and steadfastly defended by the Church. It will continue to be confessed and defended in the Church, despite the sorrow it may cause to some.

The third Person is the Holy Spirit.

XXVI. Thus far, we have spoken of the Godhead of the Father and of the Son, and of their relationship to each other. Now we shall turn our attention to the Third Person, who appears in the Word under the name HOLY SPIRIT. Concerning this, we will consider:

1. The Name.
2. That He is a Person.
3. That He is the true God and a Divine Person.
4. The relationship that exists between Him and the other Divine Persons, and the foundation of this relationship, which is the procession of the Father and of the Son.

The third Person is called the Holy Spirit in Scripture, in Hebrew הוּר Ruach, in Greek πνεῦμα pneuma. This word is used to refer to various things such as:

- The wind, John 3:8.
 - Angels, Hebrews 1:14.
 - The soul of man, Ecclesiastes 12:7.
 - And its movements, Galatians 6:1.
 - To express the spiritual nature of God, there is no more suitable word for us than the word Spirit.
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- Sometimes this word is taken essentially, and it signifies the Godhead, the Divine Essence, consisting of three Persons. John 4:24: "God is a Spirit." • Sometimes it is taken personally, as it is said of the Son. 1 Corinthians 15:45: "The last Adam became a life-giving spirit." • And very often, the third Person is referred to in this way. Matthew 28:19, 1 John 5:7. • Sometimes the word Spirit signifies the operation of the Holy Spirit. Acts 10:44, 45: "The Holy Spirit fell on

all who heard the Word... the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles."

In contemplating the Holy Spirit, we delve into the profound mystery of the Godhead, seeking to understand the nature of this Divine Person and His role in the divine plan for humanity.

We speak of the third Person of the Divine Essence, not only as the Spirit but as the Holy Spirit, as presented to us in the Word.

The third Person is called the Spirit:

(a) Because of the personal attribute, the procession of the third Person from the Father and the Son, which can be represented to us no clearer than by the word Spirit, which comes from blowing. Therefore, He is called the Breath of the Almighty, Job 33:4, the Spirit of His mouth, Psalm 33:6.

(b) Because of His manner of operation, which occurs as if by a kind of blowing, indicated by the accompanying signs of wind and blowing. When the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the whole house was filled with a sound like a mighty rushing wind, Acts 2:2, 4. When the Lord Jesus gave them the promise of the Holy Spirit, He breathed on them, John 20:22.

(c) Because of the effect, making His own swift and ready for the service of God. Psalm 104:4. He makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flaming fire. John 3:8. The wind blows where it wishes, ... so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.

He is called the Holy Spirit, not because He is holier than the Father and the Son. Isaiah proclaims "Holy, holy, holy" three times regarding the three Persons of the Divine Essence, Isaiah 6:3. But:

(a) Because of His manner of existence through the procession from the Father and the Son, from which He is named and by which He is from the Father and the Son. When the three Persons are mentioned together, the first is called Father from His personal attribute, the Second Person, also from His personal attribute, is called Son; thus, the Third Person, from His personal attribute, is called the Holy Spirit. And because the manner of working follows the manner of existence, They also come to us in the execution of the work of redemption under that name. (b) Because of His work in the elect. Romans 15:16. Sanctified by the Holy Spirit. 2 Thessalonians 2:13. In sanctification of the Spirit.

He is a substance, a Person.

XXVII. The Holy Spirit is not merely a good movement within a person or any grace-gift but is a Person. For qualities and actions are ascribed to the Holy Spirit that belong exclusively to a person. Such as:

1. Understanding. 1 Corinthians 2:10, 11. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Here, a comparison is made between the spirit of man and the Spirit of God. Both are attributed with knowledge: one of things within man, the other of things within God. Those who partake of the Spirit of God are distinguished from the Spirit who is in them. 2 Peter 1:21. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. A spiritual person, then, in 1 Corinthians 2:11, is not said to search and know what is in God, but the Spirit of God, in contrast to the spirit of man.

2. Will. 1 Corinthians 12:11. But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. Besides the distinction of gifts, the Holy Spirit is said to be sovereign in the distribution of these gifts, bound to no one, but acting according to His free will.
3. Works. Creating the world, Psalm 33:6; Genesis 1:2. Regenerating and giving life, John 3:6; Galatians 5:25. Sending out servants, Acts 13:2. When something attributed to things that is proper to persons is expressed with elegance, it immediately becomes clear that these are not causes but means through which a person works. Now, when the Holy Spirit is said to work this and that, He first appears as the first cause who uses means in His work.
4. Appearing in a bodily sign of presence, indicating the nature of His operation, as in the Baptism of Christ, Matthew 3:16, and on the Day of Pentecost, Acts 2:1-4. A substance reveals itself through accidents (activity), but accidents cannot reveal themselves through substances.
5. The Holy Spirit is explicitly distinguished from gifts as the cause of the effect. 1 Corinthians 12:4, 8. There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, etc. When the Holy Spirit is called the power of God, Luke 24:49; Acts 10:38; Luke 1:35, it clearly indicates that He is a person, not that He is not a person, for even Christ is called the power of God, 1 Corinthians 1:24. He who possesses power and works effectively through Himself is a person. And when the Father and the Son work through the Holy Spirit, a person works through a person who proceeds from them. Even when the Holy Spirit is called a Gift, it does not deny that He is a

person, for Christ is also called a Gift, Isaiah 9:5; John 3:16; John 4:10. And even when the Holy Spirit is called a Gift, He is described as a person, distinguished from an accident as a cause of the effect, Romans 5:5. Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Is a Divine Person; the true God, which is evident:

XXVIII. The Holy Spirit is not only a Person, but He is a Divine Person, He is the true, eternal God, who created heaven and earth. This is evident from the: • Divine Names, • Attributes, • Works, • Honor.

Divine Names.

1. He who is JEHOVAH is the true, eternal God because no one else is entitled to that name and is called by that name, see chapter 3, par. 2. Now the Holy Spirit is called JEHOVAH, see Isaiah 6:3, 9. He who is called JEHOVAH Zebaoth, the LORD of Hosts, said in verse 9: Go, and tell this people, etc. This JEHOVAH was the Holy Spirit, according to the testimony of Paul, Acts 28:25, 26. Well spoke the Holy Ghost by Isaiah, the prophet, unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, etc. Psalm 95:3-9. He who is a great God and a great King above all gods, He who is JEHOVAH, in whose hand the deep places of the earth are; He who is JEHOVAH, whom one must worship and before whom one must kneel; it is said of Him: Today if ye will hear His voice, etc. When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. This was indeed the Holy Spirit, as seen in Isaiah 63:10. But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit.

The apostle confirms this: Hebrews 3:7. Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, Today, if ye will hear His voice, etc.

Consider this as well: Acts 5:3, 4. Thou hast not lied unto men but unto God. To lie to the Holy Spirit is to lie to God, and to remove all evasion, the Holy Spirit is called God, in contrast to creatures, to humans; it was not to men, not to Peter and all who were present, although they partook of the gift of the Holy Spirit and were endowed with glorious qualities; not them, but to God, Ananias and Sapphira lied, they tempted the Spirit of the Lord, verse 9. See also: 1 Corinthians 3:16. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? Compared to: 1 Corinthians 6:19. What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost? Temple and God are relative to each other; a temple is for the service of God, God dwelt in the temple in Jerusalem; He who dwells in the temple is God, so if the Holy Spirit dwells in us as in a temple, and believers are temples of the Holy Spirit, then the Holy Spirit is God. See also Numbers 6:24, 25, 26, compared to 2 Corinthians 13:13.

Attributes.

2. XXIX. He who is eternal, omnipresent, omniscient, almighty is the true, eternal God. Such is the Holy Spirit.
3. (a) Eternity. For He is the Creator of heaven and earth, as will be shown immediately. The Creator is none other than the eternal God. Before creation, there was nothing but eternity in which God dwelt, Isaiah 57:15. At the beginning of creation, the Holy Spirit was already there, hovering over the waters, Genesis 1:2.
4. (b) Omnipresence. Psalm 139:7, 8. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. The Psalmist conceives the omniscience of God and declares that no one can hide from God because He is everywhere, in heaven, on earth, in hell, with His Being; now the

Holy Spirit is everywhere with His Being, as the Psalmist says, so He is the true God.

5. (c) Omniscience. 1 Corinthians 2:10. The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. The Spirit itself, in contrast to the spirit of man, searches and knows all things, so nothing is excluded. The deep things of God, the most hidden things of God, His Being, His manner of existence, His perfections, the secret counsel of God.
6. (d) Almighty. He is the Spirit of might. Isaiah 11:2. The power of the Highest. Luke 1:35. Which omnipotence will be evident from His works, which we are about to show.

3. Works.

XXX. He who has created the world, regenerates the elect, gives them spiritual life and all gifts, teaches them to pray, guides them, raises the dead, is the true, eternal God. Now, the Holy Spirit does all of this, so He is indeed the true God. See this:

(1) Creation. Genesis 1:2. The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. Job 26:13. By His Spirit He hath garnished the heavens. Psalm 33:6. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.

(2) Regeneration and life. John 3:5. Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:6. The Spirit giveth life.

(3) All gifts. 1 Corinthians 12:11. But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit.

(4) He teaches to pray, for He is the Spirit of grace and supplication. Zechariah 12:10. The Spirit of grace and of supplications. Romans

8:26. The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

(5) He leads believers from sanctification to glory. Romans 8:14. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

(6) He raises the dead. Romans 8:11. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Honor.

3. XXXI. He in whose name one must be baptized, from whom one must seek all kinds of gifts, whom one must obey, is the true God. Now, one must be baptized in the name of the Holy Spirit, and from Him one must seek all kinds of gifts; thus, the Holy Spirit is the true God.

(1) That one must be baptized in His name is evident from Matthew 28:19. Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is a seal of the Covenant of Grace, and that is between none other than the true God and believers; in baptism, one surrenders oneself to God as the All-Sufficient, possessing everything necessary for a person's salvation, as the Most High, to be honored, feared, trusted, and obeyed; in baptism, one commits one's soul to Him, trusting that He will make us partakers of all the covenant blessings because He is true; in baptism, one subjects oneself to God, to love and serve Him. All of this is encompassed in baptism; thus, He in whose name one is baptized is the true God. Therefore, the apostle rejected with such earnestness to be baptized in His name, 1 Corinthians 1:14, 15. Because in the covenant, the three

Persons of the Godhead are active, and a believer is led from the Holy Spirit to the Son and through the Son to the Father, and the Father works through the Son and the Holy Spirit in believers, so these three Persons are explicitly named in baptism, in which the Holy Spirit is placed on the same level of dignity as the Father and the Son; thus, the Holy Spirit is the same God as the Father and the Son.

(2) That one must seek all kinds of gifts from the Holy Spirit is evident from 2 Corinthians 13:13. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Here, the Holy Spirit is placed on equal footing with the Son and the Father, the same worship is expressed in the same manner to the three Persons of the Godhead. See also the worship of the Holy Spirit in Revelation 1:4. Grace be unto you, and peace from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come, and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne. Again, the same manner of worship of the eternal God and the Holy Spirit; so, if the last part is not taken to be explanatory, as is often done, then the meaning would be: from Him which is, etc., which are the seven Spirits, namely, through whom everything is applied to believers; after all, the Holy Spirit is worshipped just as the eternal God; for He is the same eternal God.

(3) That the Holy Spirit must be obeyed and served is evident from the fact that one can sin against the Holy Spirit. We are admonished not to grieve the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 4:30. The wicked Israelites rebelled against the Holy Spirit and caused Him grief, Isaiah 63:10. Indeed, sins against the Holy Spirit are considered the greatest and unforgivable, Matthew 12:31, 32 1 John 5:16.

From all of these, each on its own and taken together, the heart is convinced that the Holy Spirit is the true God, one in essence with the Father and the Son.

XXXII. So far, we have demonstrated that the Holy Spirit is a Person, furthermore, that He is a Divine Person, one in essence with the Father and the Son; now we move on to the relationship or connection that the third Person has with the others.

Just as the Son is a different Person from the Father, so the Holy Spirit is also a different Person from the Father and the Son.

(a) He is explicitly called Another. John 14:16, Another Comforter.

(b) He is also described in such a way that He is neither the Father nor the Son but Another, John 15:26. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.

(c) Therefore, He is called a distinct Person in passages where the Father and the Son are also mentioned. See Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:13; 1 John 5:7.

(d) The Holy Spirit is also said to work just as the Father and the Son do, and that from both of them. John 16:13, 14. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

The Holy Spirit is not coexistence but proceeds by spiration. A. from the Father The Holy Spirit is not coexistence, simultaneous existence, or co-presence without a Personal relation to the Father,

but He is a Divine Person, whose Nature of Personhood consists in relation to the Father and the Son, whose foundation is the eternal Procession of the Father and of the Son. The Son proceeds from the Father by eternal generation; the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son in a manner that is best expressed by spiration.

(1) This is indicated by the word "Spirit" itself in Hebrew and Greek.

(2) Therefore, He is also called the Breath of the Almighty, Job 33:4, and the Spirit of the Lord's mouth, Psalm 33:5.

(3) The mode of operation corresponds to the mode of existence. The third Person works by a mode of inspiration; therefore, He also exists in that manner. See John 3:8. The wind bloweth where it listeth... so is everyone that is born of the Spirit. That's why the Lord Jesus used such a sign when He promised the Spirit to His disciples. John 20:28. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Likewise, the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit amid the sound of a mighty rushing wind, Acts 2:2.

B. from the Son. The third Person proceeds both from the first Person and from the second Person. There has been a fierce and prolonged dispute between the Greek and Latin churches regarding this matter. The Greek Church contended that the Holy Spirit proceeded only from the Father, while the Latin Church opposed this view, upholding the always believed and confessed truth that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son. This truth is still believed and confessed by the grace of the Lord and will always be believed and confessed in the Church. This is evident from the Scriptures.

1. In passages where the Holy Spirit is referred to as the Spirit of the Son, the Spirit of Christ.
 - Galatians 4:6. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts.
 - Romans 8:9. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.
 - 1 Peter 1:11. Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.
2. In passages where the Son is said to send the Holy Spirit.
 - John 15:26. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.
 - John 16:7. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. As it is in operation, so it is in existence. The mode of operation follows the mode of existence. He receives from the Son, but not from the Son as a lesser first Cause.
3. In passages where it is said that the Holy Spirit receives from the Son and imparts it to the elect. John 16:13, 14, 15. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. The operations of the Father and the Son with regard to the procession of the Holy Spirit should not be regarded as

two different principles; for it is one operation, it is the same power. Thus, it is seen that both the Father and the Son are the primary active Causes, and not that the Son is a lesser primary cause, so that the Father would cause the Holy Spirit to proceed through the Son. However, with regard to the mode and order of both existence and operation, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son and from the Father through the Son.

XXXIII. From all that has been said, it is indisputably clear to all who believe the Scriptures that the one Divine Being exists in three Persons, and what relationship they have to each other. All objections raised by the corrupt human understanding, whether from the Socinians or those who share their views, are based on human and temporal matters that have no place in the eternal God and can be easily answered.

When God is said to be One and Three, is that not a contradiction or inconsistency?

(1) No, because it does not apply to the same aspect. God is one in essence and three in Persons, not three in essence, not one in Person.

(2) There are three Persons who are eternal, infinite, and omnipotent, but not three eternities, infinities, or omnipotences; rather, there is one eternity, infinity, and omnipotence.

(3) When John 17:3 says, "That they may know thee, the only true God," it does not mean that the Father alone, to the exclusion of the Son and the Holy Spirit, is the true God, but that the Father is the only true God; the word "only" should not be attached to "Father" but to "God." The Son is the same only God, and the only true God is also the Holy Spirit, as proven above.

(4) The words "generate," "proceed," do not imply precedence or subsequence, nor do they imply a transition from non-existence to existence because everything is eternal. It is in the eternal nature of God that the Divine Being exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the Father generating, the Son being generated, and the Holy Spirit proceeding from both.

(5) It is not imperfection that one Person cannot be attributed with what belongs to another; rather, it is perfection for each Person and for the Godhead to exist in Persons, each having their Personal attributes.

(6) When Christ acknowledges the Father as greater in John 14:28, it does not pertain to His divinity, for He is equal to the Father (Philippians 2:6), and He is one with the Father (1 John 5:7). This pertains to His mediatorial office, in which context the Father calls Him His Servant (Isaiah 53:11).

(7) When the Holy Spirit is said to be a Gift, sent, poured out, and believers are said to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, it refers to His extraordinary and ordinary workings. Also, the Son is called a Gift (Isaiah 9:5; John 3:16; John 4:10) and is said to be sent (John 5:36). Among humans, likenesses are sent when a gathering dispatches someone from among them. Persons can also be gifts; a father gives his daughter in marriage, and lords may give away their slaves.

(8) When it is said that the Spirit had not yet been given in John 7:39, it does not speak of the Person of the Holy Spirit, for He already existed, as seen in the baptism of Christ (Matthew 3:16), but it speaks of the abundant gifts of the Spirit that were promised to believers to receive.

(9) Dependency occurs among humans, not in God. The Son has life in Himself, just as the Father has life in Himself (John 5:26). Eternity excludes all forms of dependency. In the execution of the covenant of grace, each Person operates according to the nature of His existence: the Father from Himself, the Son from the Father, and the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, without dependency, which implies no imperfection. In this sense, John 5:19 states that the Son can do nothing by Himself. Just as He exists as the Son from the Father and not from Himself, He also cannot operate as the Father but operates as the Son of the Father. Furthermore, as Mediator, He receives everything from the Father and does nothing of Himself.

If someone says, "All of this is too high for me; I cannot understand it," I would respond that God is indeed incomprehensible. There are lesser things that you cannot understand: where do tides come from? How does your soul interact with your body? How does it happen that the limb your will commands moves accordingly? and so on. What would you, a mere speck, comprehend about the incomprehensible God! Believe that you cannot understand it because God says so, and worship the incomprehensible. If you were a believer, you would understand more of these mysteries than you can currently imagine, and you would then be able to say.

XXXIV. Up to this point, we have shown the truth of these great mysteries: that the one Divine Being exists in three Persons; that each Person is the eternal, true, and one God; that the Persons are distinguished from each other:

(a) in Names, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

(b) in Personal properties, the Father begetting, the Son being begotten, the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son.

(c) in order of existence, the Father being the first existing from Himself, the Son the second existing from the Father, the Holy Spirit the third existing from the Father and the Son.

(d) in the manner of operation, the Father working from Himself, the Son from the Father, the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son; all the outward works of God are common to all three Persons. We have not wanted to delve further into this mystery and have nothing more to say about it.

In the contemplation of the Holy Trinity, there lies great usefulness. Now we turn to the practice, which is wonderful and highly beneficial. Indeed, the entire spiritual life of a Christian consists in the exercise of this mystery and is distinct from civic virtue and natural religion. Whether this mystery is not equally clear in all true believers, whether all are equally capable of reflecting on the knowledge they have of it, and whether all can express in words what they see of it, a godly person will never deny it. He believes in it, and he has much more knowledge of it than the most learned unregenerate theologian, even though the latter may speak more eloquently. In all his religious exercises, he operates from this foundation. Guided by the Holy Spirit, he goes to the Son and through the Son to the Father, and is surrounded by the Unity as he works on the Trinity.

XXXV. The Remonstrants, who used not to deny the Trinity, nevertheless tried to diminish its significance by claiming that it has no utility. However, the Word testifies to the contrary.

1. Knowledge leads to salvation. In such passages that show that salvation lies in the knowledge and recognition of God as Triune in Persons. See:

- John 17:3. And this is eternal life, that they may know You [the Father, verse 1], the only true God, and Jesus Christ, [the Son, verse 1] whom You have sent.
 - John 14:1, 9, 10. You believe in God; believe also in Me. He who has seen Me has seen the Father. Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?
 - 1 John 2:23. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either.
 - John 20:31. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.
2. The power of our baptism lies in it. This is also evident from our baptism, which is done in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Matthew 28:19. In this holy baptism, we are committed to these three Persons. In Their name, the covenant of grace is confirmed to us. Baptism obliges everyone to trust in Their name, acknowledge, love, serve Them, and let ourselves be guided, comforted, and worked upon by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Baptism also obliges us to worship these three Persons and seek the blessing of each one of Them. 2 Corinthians 13:13. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
3. Each Person works distinctively in the hearts of believers. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit reveal themselves distinctly to believers, meet them, and work in them. John 14:23. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. The Holy Spirit dwells in the godly as in a temple, 1 Corinthians 6:19. From all of this, it is clear that no one can serve God except as Triune in Persons, and those who honor and serve Him as such are truly godly here and will be

blessed hereafter. Therefore, this truth is of the utmost usefulness and necessity.

XXXVI. To illustrate the benefits one can derive from this mystery, we will follow the order of the Persons.

God the Father recognized by the believers:

1. As the Beginning of all things and also of their salvation, that He chose them from eternity and appointed them to be objects of His eternal love, to glorify them and make them partakers of an incomprehensible bliss for eternity; everything is from Him, through Him, and to Him.
2. That the Father has appointed His eternal, only-begotten, and beloved Son as the Surety for the elect, to show thereby to angels and humans His pure justice and unfathomable mercy, wisdom, freedom in grace, and wonderful kindness, so that this sight would increase their happiness.
3. That the Father, to achieve this end, created the world, confined humanity under sin through their own fault, and by His providence sustains and directs everything in such a way that it all serves and benefits His chosen ones, whom He has made owners of the whole world.
4. That the Father sent His Son into the world according to the counsel of peace, caused Him to assume human nature, and as Surety, through His suffering and death, and by His submission to the law and perfect obedience, satisfied His justice, thus redeeming the elect from guilt and punishment and acquiring the right to eternal life.
5. That the Father sends His Holy Spirit into their hearts to enlighten the elect, regenerate them, lead them to Christ, unite

them with Christ through faith, comfort them, and lead them to glory through the path of holiness.

6. That the Father adopts them as His children and heirs, loves them as His children, and takes care of everything concerning them. This contemplation gives rise to a childlike disposition in believers. The soul humbles itself, rejoices, and takes boldness to cry out, "Abba, Father!" It entrusts itself and all its affairs into the hands of the Father, confiding everything to Him, living from His hand, presenting her needs to Him as her Father, and making her desires known to Him. She is willing to obey her Father and serve Him according to His will. For a more comprehensive understanding, see Chapter XXXV, On Sonship.

XXXVII. Regarding God the Son, the believers consider Him:

1. As the only suitable Redeemer, capable of becoming the Surety and making the elect His sons and daughters, children of the Father, and they marvel at the unfathomable wisdom of God in appointing such a suitable Person as a Surety.
2. They see the marvelous love of the Son in that He, in the eternal counsel of peace, appointed Himself as the Surety to carry out the great work of redemption.
3. That He, in the fullness of time, humbled Himself, taking on the form of a servant, adopting their nature, and not being ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, allowing them to have fellowship with Him.
4. That, out of boundless love, He voluntarily took upon Himself their sins as if He had committed them Himself and willingly bore the punishment they deserved, thereby fully satisfying God's justice and reconciling them with God.
5. That He has united them with Himself as members of a spiritual body, He being the Head, and they His members, He being the

Bridegroom, and they His bride, so that in Him, who is the Son, they become sons and daughters.

6. That He brings them to God and presents them to the Father, saying, "Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me." This is the source of all salvation, where all the perfections of God are revealed in a completely different and more glorious manner than in the work of creation and sustenance. As believers behold the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, they are transformed by it, and thus they approach the Father through the Son. This will be explained in more detail later.

Regarding God the Holy Spirit:

XXXVIII. The believers recognize God the Holy Spirit as the One who applies and imparts to them everything that the Father had determined in His eternal purpose and everything that the Son had earned for them through various means, all of which are acts of kindness. Let us elaborate on this, as there may not be as much opportunity to do so in the future. He is given to them and dwells within them.

1. The Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit into the hearts of believers, and the Holy Spirit dwells within them as in a temple. The elect are, by nature, just like all others before their regeneration (Jude 1:19): natural people who do not have the Spirit. Since it is the Spirit alone who gives life, they are dead in sins and trespasses, living in complete separation from God. They have no awareness of sin and condemnation, of salvation, of spiritual life, and no desire for these things. Earthly matters consume all the faculties of their souls and all the members of their bodies. Their religion is merely a carnal work to appease their consciences, and they find satisfaction in this done work

while disliking anything resembling light, spirituality, and true godliness, considering it too close for comfort.

But when the appointed time for the elect arrives, God gives them the Holy Spirit, who enlightens and regenerates them and, through faith, makes them partakers of Christ and all His blessings. See these passages:

- Galatians 4:6: "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'"
- Romans 8:15: "For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.'"
- 1 Corinthians 2:12: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God."

Not only His gifts, but the Person Himself XXXIX. Here arises the question: in what way or with what respect do believers receive the Holy Spirit, is it only in relation to the gifts of the Spirit, or is the Person Himself imparted to them? I answer:

(1) The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers is not a mere presence, like His omnipresence as God is everywhere present.

(2) Nor is it just an external relationship or connection, recognizing them as children of God and objects of His work.

(3) It is also not merely the impartation of His gifts, such as faith, hope, and love, etc.

(4) But the Person Himself is given to believers, and He dwells in them in a manner that is incomprehensible and unspeakable to us,

infinitely beyond them, yet in an extraordinary way within them. This is evident:

He Himself is given to them.

1. From passages in which the Holy Spirit is expressly said not only to be given to them but also to dwell in them.
 - John 14:16, 17: "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees Him nor knows Him, but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you."
 - 1 Peter 1:11: "the Spirit of Christ who was in them."
 - 1 Corinthians 3:16: "Do you not know that... the Spirit of God dwells in you?"

Objection. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are called the Holy Spirit Himself, Acts 10:44, 45. Answer:

(a) Not always and everywhere is the Holy Spirit referred to as His gifts; thus, the objection has no force. One would have to show that the mentioned and similar passages refer to the gifts, not the Person.

(b) The Spirit given to the children of God and His gifts are explicitly distinguished; the gifts teach, lead, comfort, testify, regenerate, but they do not give faith. The Person Himself, the Holy Spirit, accomplishes all these things, distributing to each as He wills.

(c) Also, the gifts of the Spirit are given to the reprobate, as in Hebrews 6:4. Yet, they do not have Christ as their own, as the indwelling of the Spirit does. Romans 8:9: "But you are not in the

flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."

Therefore, it remains certain that the Person of the Holy Spirit Himself dwells in believers in an unspeakable and God-befitting manner.

2. They are temples of the Holy Spirit. From passages in which believers are called temples of the Holy Spirit: 1 Corinthians 3:16, "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" 1 Corinthians 6:19, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God?" Just as God Himself, and not His gifts, dwelt in the temple in Jerusalem (Exodus 29:45, "I will dwell among the children of Israel"; Psalm 76:3, "In Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling place in Zion"; Psalm 80:2, "who sits between the cherubim"), the Holy Spirit now dwells in believers in the same way.
3. They cannot be satisfied except with the Infinite. Believers have an infinite desire that can only be satisfied by the Infinite. The gifts of God are not infinite, and a believer cannot be satisfied with them alone. God Himself must be their portion, and He is their portion. They are united with God in Christ and made perfect in one (John 17:23). Thus, not only are the gifts of the Spirit in believers, but the Spirit Himself.

Objection 1.

The Holy Spirit is infinite and cannot dwell in a finite human being. Answer: The presence of God in a place or person does not mean He is confined there and not elsewhere simultaneously. Rather, it signifies that He, who is infinitely and omnipresent, is truly present

there in an unspeakable manner, not in a physical but in an extraordinary way of presence. The Second Person, the Son of God, is personally in the human nature of Christ, yet infinitely beyond it. We mention this not to suggest that the Holy Spirit is personally and in such a manner united with humanity as the Deity is with the human nature of Christ—far, far from such a thought. Rather, we do so to show that the objection is without merit because God is said to be present in a place without being confined there but rather simultaneously existing infinitely beyond it. Thus, it indicates an extraordinary and incomprehensible mode of presence of the omnipresent Spirit.

Objection 2.

God is incommunicable and cannot communicate Himself to a human being but imparts all His gifts. Therefore, when it is said that the Holy Spirit dwells in someone, it must refer to the gifts of the Spirit. Answer: We do not say that the Holy Spirit imparts His essence or His Person and that a human being thus becomes deified or God Himself. We utterly abhor such an abomination. Nor do we say that the Holy Spirit is essentially or personally united with believers, as the divine nature of Christ is with the human or as the soul of a person is with the body. We also do not claim that the Holy Spirit is the formal cause of a person's actions, such that it is not the person but the Holy Spirit who believes, hopes, and prays—such a notion is foolishness.

However, we do say that the Holy Spirit is present in believers in an extraordinary mode of presence, one that is incomprehensible and unspeakable to us, and yet truly and really, just as He manifested His presence in the temple through His gracious workings. Angels, when assuming bodies, are present but do not constitute the essence;

rather, they assist, not as informing forms but as attendants, not animating but moving the bodies and the ship. Similarly, though the analogy is imperfect, the Holy Spirit is in believers and causes them to act.

The Holy Spirit works in them.

XL. The Holy Spirit, given to the children of God, is not idle within them but operates various spiritual gifts and graces: faith, regeneration, makes them partakers of Christ and all His benefits, teaches them to pray, guides them, comforts them, seals them, and abides with them for eternity.

Faith.

1. The Holy Spirit works faith in them. Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." This is why the Holy Spirit is also called the Spirit of faith. 2 Corinthians 4:13, "And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, 'I believed and therefore I spoke,' we also believe and therefore speak." 1 Corinthians 12:9, "to another faith by the same Spirit."

The Holy Spirit appears in those who are darkened in their understanding and alienated from the life of God due to the ignorance that is in them. He opens their eyes of understanding so that they begin to recognize their misery, the filth and sinfulness of their hearts, the wicked thoughts and deeds that have come from them, and their repulsiveness, hatred, and condemnation. This stirs in them a desire to obtain grace from God. However, the Spirit shows them the righteousness of God, which does not allow even the slightest sin to go unpunished but must surely be punished with eternal damnation. Thus, those who sought refuge in God are

brought to a standstill, becoming disheartened and desperate. In this state, the Holy Spirit reveals to them the necessity of a surety if they are to be saved, one who will pay for their sins before God's justice and secure the right to eternal life for them. At the same time, He reveals to them that God Himself has devised and sent into the world a Surety, namely His only-begotten Son, the Lord Jesus. He also discloses the blessings of the covenant contained in Him, along with His loveliness, causing them to fall in love with salvation and the Surety, desiring to share in both. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit persuades them that these blessings are offered to them individually through that Surety in the Gospel. As a result, the Spirit awakens in them a strong desire for the Surety, leading to choosing, yearning, looking, waiting, and praying. Then comes hope, followed by periods of darkness and hopelessness, with the work resuming repeatedly. Through this conflict, they gain confidence and accept the offered Surety, wholeheartedly embracing His offer without reservation or exception. They fully surrender themselves to Him, just as they are, to be justified, sanctified, and brought to salvation through Him. Based on His Word, they appropriate the Surety for themselves, relying on His faithfulness and power, leaning on Him, committing themselves to Jesus, sometimes with light and assurance, sometimes in darkness and with much struggle. Indeed, from the day they accepted Jesus, they continue to work with Him, making use of Him to obtain peace and holiness.

Rebirth.

XLI. 2. Man in his natural state is spiritually dead, separated from God, immersed in worldly matters, and teeming with all kinds of sins, like a lifeless carcass swarming with worms. But when the time comes for each chosen one, the Holy Spirit awakens them, granting them spiritual life, born out of the union of the soul with God in

Christ. Through this, Christ takes shape within them, and the form of their soul becomes like that of Jesus.

What they once esteemed glorious, they now find contemptible; what used to bring pleasure now brings sorrow; what they once sought, they now flee from. Their minds change, their wills change, their passions change; they become a new creation. From this transformed state of the soul arise thoughts of God and contemplations of heavenly things. This transformation results in different speech, godly conversations, sanctified actions, joy in the godly, dignity in behavior, modesty in attire—in a word, such a transformation as if a dead person were rising from the grave. However, this life is not initially perfect; it starts small and gradually grows, as do its deeds. It is all but partial, yet genuine.

This life is now the work of the Holy Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:6, "who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." Titus 3:5, "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." John 3:5, "Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.'" Although the Holy Spirit does not need any means for this, He uses the Word as a means but directly touches the soul in an unknown way, as if by a creative power, as He once moved upon the waters during creation. In Hebrew, the term "Merachepheth" is used, indicating such movement that shapes and produces while in motion. The Word, I say, is used by the Spirit in regeneration; consider this: James 1:18, "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth." 1 Peter 1:23, "having been born again, not of corruptible seed but

incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever."

Making Them Partakers of Christ and His Benefits.

XLII. 3. The Holy Spirit makes them partakers of Christ and His benefits. They were indeed chosen, the ransom was already paid for them, salvation was already obtained, but before their rebirth, they did not possess these blessings. However, when the Holy Spirit enters them, He brings them to Christ and grants them faith, through which Christ dwells in their hearts. Ephesians 3:17, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." They become one spirit with Him, as members with the head, as a branch with the vine, as a bride with the bridegroom. This unity is rooted in love, which naturally seeks union, giving rise to the mutual pronoun "my." Song of Solomon 2:16, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." From communion with Christ flows communion with His benefits, such as:

(a) His payment, leading to reconciliation with God. Galatians 2:20, "who loved me and gave Himself for me." Romans 5:10, "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son."

(b) His holiness. 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Colossians 2:10, "And you are complete in Him."

(c) His intercession. 1 John 2:1, "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

(d) His glory. Romans 8:17, "and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may

also be glorified together."

(e) And everything promised in the covenant of grace, including both deliverance and consummation. Romans 8:32, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

Teaches them to pray.

XLIII. 4. The Holy Spirit teaches them to pray; He is therefore called the Spirit of prayer. Zechariah 12:10, "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication." Romans 8:26, "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." The Spirit shows them their lack and makes them sensitive to it. He reveals to them the spiritual matters in all their loveliness, causing them to fall in love with them. He prompts them to seek these through prayer to God. He assures them that God will hear them and grant their desires according to His good pleasure. He molds them into a praying posture, one of humility and faith. He takes them by the hand and leads them to the throne of grace. He instills strong desires in them and spiritualizes them, putting the words in their mouths. And if the matters are too profound, the desires too strong, and their hearts are so overwhelmed that they cannot utter a word, the Spirit comes to their aid, helping them express their desires with unutterable sighs, saying more than words can express.

Guides them.

XLIV. 5. The Holy Spirit guides them. The way is narrow, one cannot take a single step aside without falling. It is steep, requiring constant

climbing. It is slippery, not inherently, but for them; their feet easily slip to the side. It is beset with many enemies who refuse to let them pass, and they must break through while battling. Moreover, they are in the dark; they hardly know the way. They are weak and prone to stumble. They become tired quickly, and the enemies are too swift and strong. There seems to be no way through for them. But the Holy Spirit guides them as one would guide a blind person. He leads the ignorant along the path they must travel, as Isaiah 42:16 says, "I will bring the blind by a way they did not know." He shows them the way and says, "This is the way; walk in it" (Isaiah 30:21). He inclines their will to make them willing to walk in it. He encourages them and repeatedly stirs them up. He continually supplies them with new strength. He gives strength to the weary and multiplies the power of those who have no might (Isaiah 40:29). Thus, they go through the darkness in His light.

Comforts them.

XLV. 6. The Holy Spirit comforts them. He is called the Comforter in John 14:16, John 15:26, and John 16:7. Believers encounter many adversities. Dark clouds descend upon them, they are overwhelmed by their corrupt flesh, Satan attacks them with fiery arrows, unbelief rises up, God hides His face from them, appearing to reject and be angry with them. One adversity follows another, making it seem impossible to find a way through. They live in fear of death, and the king of terror seizes them. In such and similar trials that could overwhelm their souls, the Holy Spirit comes to support them with His consolation in various ways:

(a) He reveals the insignificance of the cross, making it seem so small that it is not worth bearing, especially when He shows them their coming glory. Their judgment aligns with Paul's in Romans 8:18,

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

(b) He reveals the brevity of the cross, that it is passing away. 2 Corinthians 4:17 says, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment." What happened yesterday is already gone, and we do not know what will happen tomorrow. We only have the present, and it passes quickly as time goes on. What is our entire life in comparison to eternity?

(c) He shows the benefit hidden in affliction: how it humbles them, makes them patient, turns them away from the world, teaches them to depend on God and trust in Him, and sanctifies them. Hebrews 12:10-11 demonstrates this, "For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

(d) He reveals that this is God's way, that He leads all His children to heaven through these trials. It is His sovereign will to deal with them in this manner, and that will is full of wisdom and goodness. He instills in them a love for God's will, so that they also desire it and pray, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will; Your will be done" (Matthew 26:39, 42).

(e) He assures them of God's love and grace toward them, that they have found grace in His eyes. The assurance is enough for them to consider all their crosses as nothing. We see this in Paul's case in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I

will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

(f) He shows them the outcome, as they have often experienced. He shows them that the scepter of the wicked will not always rest on the lot of the righteous, that the cross will not go too high or last too long, that it will not overwhelm them, and that He will be with them as they pass through water and fire, so that the streams will not drown them and the flames will not consume them. He assures them that they will come through the trials as gold from the crucible, even to the point that they will thank the Lord for dealing with them in faithfulness. See the promise in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." It makes a significant difference whether someone presents the same things to us or we contemplate them ourselves, or whether the Holy Spirit presents them to us, making them clear and impressing them upon us with power. Then they have weight, then they comfort the heart, and then we bear the cross with courage.

Seals them.

XLVI. 7. The Holy Spirit seals them. (a) In sealing, there is a signet that contains the image that is transferred, which in this case is the image of God. (b) The wax in which the image is impressed, which here represents the human heart, being recreated in the image of God. (c) The transferring of the image, which is done by the Spirit of God, impressing this image of God on the person and causing Christ to take form within them.

Sealing serves various purposes.

(1) To conceal something, so that others cannot see what is inside, like sealing letters. Similarly, a believer is sealed and hidden from the sight of the world, which cannot perceive the Spirit, as mentioned in John 14:17, "The world cannot receive Him." Therefore, the world does not know us, as stated in 1 John 3:1.

(2) To preserve something intact, which is why chests and cabinets in a deceased person's home are sealed. Likewise, believers are a closed garden, a sealed well, and a sealed fountain, as mentioned in the Song of Solomon 4:12.

(3) To distinguish something as one's own from other things, as goods for sale are sealed. God also recognizes His own by this seal, as seen in 2 Timothy 2:19, "Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His.'"

(4) By this, they are known to others. Isaiah 61:9 states, "And their descendants shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people." In John 13:35, Jesus said, "By this all will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another." Acts 14:13 mentions that people recognized them as those who had been with Jesus.

(5) By this, they know themselves. 1 John 2:3 says, "Now by this we know that we know Him if we keep His commandments." 2 Corinthians 13:5 adds, "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified."

(6) To confirm something, like sealing deeds and contracts. Similarly, the Holy Spirit seals believers, confirming to them the covenant of grace and assuring them of their participation in it. 2

Corinthians 1:22 states, "who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee."

XLVII. This sealing, confirming to the believers that they are partakers of the covenant of grace, is done in various ways. Such as:

By revealing to them that He dwells within them.

1. By the revelation to the believers that He dwells within them as in a temple. The bride pleads in the Song of Solomon 8:6, "Set me as a seal upon your heart," meaning, imprint me so deeply in your heart that you continually think of me, and my form is always before your eyes. In a similar manner, the Holy Spirit sets Himself as a seal upon the hearts of believers, impressing upon them His presence and indwelling, so that they see that they are partakers of the Holy Spirit. Through this, they are clearly and powerfully assured, as if sealed, that they are partakers of the covenant. 1 John 4:13 reinforces this: "By this, we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit." The Spirit Himself is given to them as a guarantee that God will make them partakers of all the promised goods, so they cannot be sealed and assured any higher because God Himself is the guarantee and infinitely more valuable than salvation itself. Ephesians 1:13-14 confirms this: "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance." Ephesians 4:30 adds, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

By impressing upon them the image of God.

2. The Holy Spirit seals them by impressing upon them the image of God and by showing them and making them see that the image of

God is within them. He convinces them of their initial transformations and transition into Christ through their faith, demonstrating that they have truly accepted Christ, both for their justification and sanctification. He reveals their insatiable desire for continuous communion with God and their spiritual life, albeit still small, as genuine. He shows that they hate sins and, even though they are wounded by inward sins and shortcomings in doing good, and have sorrow over it, their entire endeavor is to be holy. The Spirit makes these things evident to them, so they see it and cannot deny or doubt it. 1 Corinthians 2:12 emphasizes this: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God." Upon revealing these aspects, He leads them to the Word and the promises made to those like them. He prepares the Scriptures for them, making them recognize the infallible truth, and in this state, He brings them into the presence of God. He helps them draw conclusions from two premises: first, taken from their grace, and second, from the Word. They conclude with certainty that they are indeed children of God and will partake of eternal salvation. In this process of reaching a conclusion, the Holy Spirit not only works to make grace evident in them and the Scriptural promises clear and certain, but He also works in the formation of the conclusion itself. He makes it firm and sure, and with His sealing power, He imprints it so deeply that they believe it with absolute certainty, as if they saw it with their eyes and touched it with their hands. Romans 8:16-17 confirms this: "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."

XLVIII. The Holy Spirit also seals more immediately through clear and powerful inspirations, such as: "You are loved with an eternal love; your sins are forgiven; you are an heir of eternal life," and so on. These inspirations sometimes come through a specific Scripture

passage that is deeply impressed upon them, and sometimes without an explicit reference, yet always in accordance with the Word to which the inspiration can be tested.

This immediate sealing not only serves to confirm their state, but the Holy Spirit also allows them to taste the very things themselves. This results in a quiet peace, delightful sweetness, and refreshing joy. Through this, one becomes intoxicated with love, attains a holy disposition, lifts their heart in the ways of the Lord, and becomes ready as a warrior to fight against enemies and to walk in the path of God's commandments. The bride calls this "kissing" in the Song of Solomon 1:12: "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for Your love is better than wine." She also speaks of it in Song of Solomon 2:4-6: "He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love," and so on. David desired this in Psalm 35:3: "Say to my soul, 'I am your salvation.'" This is what the Lord Jesus promised in John 14:21, 23: "I will love him and manifest Myself to him. We will come to him and make our home with him."

However, this clarity is not experienced by all in the same degree. Many remain in darkness and fear that they have neither the indwelling of the Spirit nor the graces within them. They cannot confidently deduce the arguments from the Word without doubt, and they still have a quiet fear of deceiving themselves. Many sealed ones do not experience immediate sealed inspirations, and some who have experienced both may not always enjoy them. Those who were, like Paul, caught up to the third heaven may indeed be struck by the enemy. Those who, like Peter, walked on the sea by faith, may later sink in unbelief. The enlightened ones may become dark, the joyful may later become sorrowful, so that those who were once so assured may sink into doubt and only hold on through reflecting on the days of old.

XLIX. How holy one must keep themselves, being a temple of the Holy Spirit, so that He may delight in dwelling therein! How careful one must be not to defile the temple of God, neither by their own sinful actions nor by leading others into sin! For he who defiles the temple of God, God will destroy (1 Corinthians 3:16). Therefore, be cautious not to grieve the Holy Spirit, neither through bold sins against His warning, nor through a careless way of life, nor by resisting His guidance. "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God" (Ephesians 4:30), but acknowledge His indwelling, willingly receive His workings, listen to His comforts, and follow His guidance so that He may be pleased with you and work within you with increasing power.

L. There is great value in believing in the Holy Trinity, isn't there? It is the foundation of a truly godly life and the source of all comfort. Therefore, recognize God as one in essence and three in persons. Observe the manner of operation of each person in the administration of the covenant of grace and also within yourself.

Consider each person with appropriate thoughts, observations, and actions, and you will experience significant and steady progress in godliness. There will be a marvelous revelation of unity as you contemplate each person and of the Trinity as you consider the Unity. In the "dim twilight" of the Holy Trinity, there is so much light, comfort, joy, and holiness. What will it be like, and how will the soul be affected when it beholds God's face in righteousness and is satisfied with His image upon waking up! Psalm 17:15 says, "As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness." Therefore, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people He has chosen as His own inheritance" (Psalm 33:12).

Chapter 5

On the Decrees of God in General.

Having presented the principles by which God is known and the nature of God in His Essence, Attributes, and Persons, we now turn to the contemplation of God's external works. These can be observed either in their inception or in their execution.

God's works in their inception are His decrees, both in general and specifically, including the eternal ordination of humanity concerning their eternal state, as well as the counsel of peace or the covenant of redemption in which the Son becomes the Surety for the chosen.

God's works in their execution are either of nature, which includes Creation and Providence, or of grace, which is the fulfillment of the grand work of Redemption.

We begin with the Decrees of God, a matter in which there lies exceptional comfort, contentment, peace, and joy for a believing child of God.

God, in Himself, is self-sufficient. He had no need to create creatures; the creature neither brings Him glory nor happiness. However, it has pleased the Lord to create creatures to share His goodness and make them happy. In creating creatures, God forms an eternal purpose and plan within Himself, determining what, how, where, when each creature will be, what it will do, and what each will encounter. The specifics are known to us from the Word of God, but the manner in which God decrees is hidden from us. We see them

from behind, not from the front; we speak of them in human terms and understand them in a manner befitting God.

Unacknowledged by Many. II. The Socinians and Remonstrants, perceiving the contingency of things, as well as the fact that humans act voluntarily, are eager to exempt all things, and especially humans, from God's governance. They fail to see how God could have decreed everything so firmly. They question, "Where would the contingency of things be? What about human free will? What purpose would prayer, admonition, and diligence serve? How could we absolve God from being the cause of sin and human damnation? If humans were to contribute nothing to their salvation, they might as well give up and let themselves drift on the waves." Therefore, they deny that God has taken such a decree concerning everything and all particular matters from eternity.

On the contrary, we, standing in the truth, firmly uphold such a decree according to God's Word, confess it, and make holy use of it. To clarify this truth to everyone, we will present it in its nature and qualities, confirm it from God's Word, answer objections, and then urge its application.

Expressed in Various Words. III. We begin with the Word. The Scripture, teaching that God has created, sustains, and governs all things according to a decree He took within Himself beforehand, employs various words to express and present this eternal decree, such as:

1. Decree. Psalm 2:7. I will declare the decree. Luke 22:32. As it is determined by decree.
2. Ordained. Job 23:14. He will accomplish what is ordained for me.

3. Determined plan and foreknowledge. Acts 2:23. This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. Acts 4:28. To do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.
4. Purpose of His will and pleasure. Isaiah 46:11. My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose. Ephesians 1:11. Who works all things according to the counsel of His will.
5. Purpose. Romans 8:28. Those who are called according to His purpose. Ephesians 1:9. Making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His purpose, which He set forth in Christ. These passages not only reveal the various names for the decree but also convincingly affirm the truth of the matter that God has taken an eternal decree, according to which everything in time is carried out.

All Human Limitations Removed.

IV. When humans make a decision, they consider matters from all angles, whether it is feasible, what is against it, what is in favor, etc. Often, they cannot fully comprehend the matter, vacillate at times, and must make decisions based on the circumstances at hand, and so on. But all these imperfections are far from the all-knowing, supremely wise, almighty, and unchanging God; the Lord's ways are not like our ways. We cannot fathom how God makes a decision, plan, and purpose; however, we know that He does, and these human terms convey to us the unfathomable wisdom and unshakable steadfastness of God's purpose and His complete order over everything that is and will happen.

Description. By the Decree of God, we mean an eternal, voluntary, all-wise, independent, and unchangeable purpose of God concerning

everything and every matter that would occur, and how they would occur in time.

V. Before the creation of the world, there was only eternity—no matter, no substance, no forms, or anything that one could imagine or name. God, dwelling in eternity, purposed to create a world, to fill it with creatures, to sustain and govern them, determining and defining each one's place and everything they would do, as well as what would happen to each one, from beginning to end. This decree is the primary cause and example or model from which and according to which things in time are both His and occur, and they are so and happen so, and not otherwise. People first conceive an idea or form of things they want to create by adding and subtracting elements they have seen in their beginnings or in part or in whole; but in God, no image or form of things is impressed upon Him for what He intended to create; God expresses them Himself. God's decree is the expressive prototype, and things are the expression. God's decree is not a mere accident in God, but God Himself decreeing; it is a continuing act of God's will.

Eternal.

VI. God's decree is from eternity. God does not make a decree every time circumstances arise; that is human work. Before there was anything, before He created the world, He ordained all things that He would bring forth in time: where and when each thing would be, the means by which everything would be executed, what each would do, and what would happen to each from the beginning to the end. Scripture expressly affirms this; see Acts 15:18, "Known to God from eternity are all his works." Because God knows all things that will be in time, and because He has decreed them, whereby they pass from the state of possibility by God's omnipotence into the state of

certainly by God's will, it is certain that just as God knows them from eternity, He has also decreed them from eternity. Ephesians 1:4, "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world." 2 Timothy 1:9, "According to his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began."

To be before time excludes all time; before time, there was only eternity. When one thinks, "How long before time did God make the decree?" one is, before realizing it, thinking in terms of time. Eternity is incomprehensible to us temporal humans. Therefore, if decrees exist before time, they are from eternity. In the execution of matters, there is a "how long," there is a "before" and "after," and God has also decreed these from eternity, through a single act of His will. God Himself is indeed in order and nature before the decree, but not in time because it is eternity, just as even among creatures, causes are not always earlier in time than their effects. The decree must also be distinguished, whether with regard to the decreeing God, it is a single act, or with regard to the matters decreed, they are as diverse as the matters over which the decree extends.

Voluntary.

VII. God's decree is entirely voluntary in every respect, without any compulsion or any internal or external compelling causes; it is all according to His free good pleasure. "The mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure," Ephesians 1:9. "According to the purpose of His will," verse 11. Necessity and voluntariness cannot coexist, but necessity and voluntariness come together very well. It is necessary for God's being to will; but for that will to extend to matters outside Himself, to create and govern them, to determine that this will be and that will happen, that one will be rich and another poor, that one will live here and another there—these are all

acts of pure voluntariness. God could have decreed not to create anything, and while willing to create and govern, He could have created each thing differently or dealt differently with each thing. If a potter has power over his clay to make a vessel as he freely wills, or if a father has power to furnish his house as he wishes, placing one thing here and another there, can the sovereign Lord of all not have the freedom to dispose of His clay and all His creatures as He pleases? Can anyone, who is almighty, prevent Him from making such and such a decree? Can anyone say, "Why did You decree it this way and not differently?" Can any creature compel Him, who is almighty, to make a decree in one way or another? Certainly not. His free good pleasure orders it thus, and therefore it will be so, and everything is good because He wills it so. It is a blessing for a creature to acknowledge this, approve it, and also desire it to be so.

Wisdom.

VII. God has decreed everything with eternal, infinite, and unfathomable Wisdom. When people create something strange and extraordinary, they marvel and say, "How could a person conceive all of this, and yet he did not think of it beforehand, but he had seen some principles in one thing or another, in animals, in lifeless creatures, or in human work, and by adding or subtracting, or rearranging and putting them in a different order, he devised his masterpiece. But who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or who has been His counselor?" (Isaiah 40:13). He is the only wise God (1 Timothy 1:17), whose understanding is unsearchable (Psalm 147:5). He has made everything with wisdom (Psalm 104:24), and He has also ordained and decreed everything beforehand with wisdom. "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33).

Absolute.

IX. God's decrees are independent, absolute, without any conditions depending on second causes. Every matter is firmly decreed, will certainly come to pass, have one and no other outcome and end; it will be so, and not otherwise. God has indeed decreed that many things will be carried out through secondary causes and means, but these secondary causes are not conditions of the decree, as if God had established the matter under those conditions, and as if those conditions, if not fulfilled, could change the decree, and as if those conditions were left to the power of the creature or to chance. However, the secondary causes are only means in execution and are as certain and firmly decreed as the end to be accomplished through those means, no matter how uncertain or contingent they may be with regard to second causes because contingency relates to creatures and not to God.

The question is: Has God decreed many things conditionally, so that the outcome depends on fulfilling or not fulfilling the condition, and this condition would be within the power and free will of humans? The Socinians, Remonstrants, and Jesuits say yes, we say no. Because:

God is all-knowing and almighty.

1. If God made such a conditional decree, it would either be because He could not do otherwise, being prevented from carrying out His decree, or because He did not want otherwise and chose to place the fulfillment of the condition, or non-fulfillment, in the power of humans. The first cannot be true because God is almighty, and He also exercises that almightiness in executing His decree (Isaiah 14:27, "The Lord of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it?"). The second cannot be true

either because a creature cannot act independently of Him, and the creature cannot work without His influence and guidance (Philippians 2:13, "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do according to His good pleasure").

Counterargument.

Human nature does not allow God to make a decree about matters involving human free will because God has created human will in such a way that it cannot be coerced but always retains the freedom to choose to do something or not. God could make a decree to save someone without any conditions; they would live as they lived. However, if God chooses to elect a person to salvation who will believe and repent, then that cannot happen without a condition that depends on the free will to believe and choose to repent or not. Answer.

(a) Freedom of the will does not consist of indifference to do or not do something but rather in doing what one does with one's own judgment and inclination.

(b) Freedom of indifference and freedom of inclination are not independent of God. God makes humans want. He works the willing. He fashions the hearts of all people (Psalm 33:15). He inclines the hearts even of kings like watercourses to all that He desires (Proverbs 21:1). He who gave humans will can certainly give them a good will, can't He?

(c) Faith and repentance are not conditions upon which the decree is made; they are means that God has decreed both as means and as the end to be executed through them. Therefore, the counterargument does not hold and does not weaken the proof.

(d) If God's decree depended on something that did not depend on Him, then the Creator would be dependent on the creature.

2. Is done according to God's good pleasure. God's decree is made solely according to His good pleasure; therefore, it cannot be made on any conditions. Matthew 11:26, "Yes, Father, for such was Your gracious will." Ephesians 1:5, "Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." This good pleasure God also unquestionably carries out. Isaiah 46:10, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure." How then can there be a condition on which God's decree would depend? It would contradict the sovereignty, wisdom, and omnipotence of God.

3. Is unchangeable. All of God's decrees are unchangeable. Romans 9:11, "That the purpose of God according to election might stand." Malachi 3:6, "For I am the Lord, I do not change." James 1:17, 18, "With whom there is no variation or shadow of turning... He brought us forth by the word of truth."

Now, everything that depends on a condition, which is not decreed and is in the power and free will of humans to do or not to do, as they please, is entirely changeable. Therefore, God's unchangeable decree does not depend on any condition. God does not change His decree based on human change, but all human changes occur according to God's unchangeable decree, which, through human changes, unchangeably accomplishes the connection He has decreed between the means and the end, between sins and punishments, between godliness and salvation.

X. Objection 1. Proverbs 1:25, "But you have disdained all my counsel." Luke 7:30, "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God for themselves." It appears that people can reject the

counsel of God and render His decree powerless, which implies that God's decrees are conditional. Answer. The word "counsel" in those passages does not refer to God's decree, which is also called counsel, but to the urging by command with promises and threats attached, as is evident from the context of the texts. Proverbs 1:25 adds, "and would have none of My rebuke." The counsel was to repent, as seen in verses 22 and 23: "Turn at my rebuke; surely I will pour out my spirit on you." They had not heeded this exhortation. Luke 7:30 is similar. John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus had exhorted them to repent, for John preached the baptism of repentance, saying, "Believe in Him who will come after me." Acts 19:4 affirms that they had not obeyed this exhortation since they had not been baptized by him.

Objection 2. In God's Word, there are many conditional promises and threats. Since all promises and threats flow from God's decree, there must also be conditional decrees. Consider the following passages as an example: Isaiah 1:19, 20, "If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword." Jeremiah 17:24, 25, 27, "And it shall be, if you heed Me carefully... then kings and princes shall enter through the gates... But if you will not heed Me... I will kindle a fire in its gates."

Answer. The fact that there are many conditional promises and threats in the Word of God, and that they originate from God's decree, is a well-known truth that we gladly embrace. However, we deny the inference that, therefore, there are also conditional decrees. The two do not necessarily go hand in hand because it only follows that God has decreed such conditional promises and threats and that God has decreed such a connection of events that it will go well for the righteous and ill for the wicked. The fact that someone becomes

righteous, repents, and believes is the work of God. God converts. James 1:18, "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth." God grants faith, Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." God works both the will and the work, Philippians 2:13, "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." Without Christ, we can do nothing, John 15:5.

The decree, in addition to this, is absolute without any condition, namely, to bring the elect to salvation through repentance and faith and to condemn the others for their sins. The decree is absolute, but its execution is through means that are as firmly decreed as the end.

Objection

3. It is said that God changes His decree when the condition is not fulfilled; therefore, the decree was conditional. The first example can be seen in 1 Samuel 2:30, where it says, "I had clearly said, 'Your house and your father's house would walk before Me forever.' But now the Lord says: 'Far be it from Me!'" 1 Samuel 13:13, 14 also seems to indicate a change in God's decree. It says, "The Lord would now have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue." Answer. In these verses, there is no mention of God's decree; rather, they speak of the execution of the decree. God does not make a decree when events occur in time; the decree has been made from eternity. Acts 15:18; Ephesians 1:4. Therefore, it does not depend on a condition that happens in time. These verses only demonstrate the connection between sins and punishments, godliness and blessings. The Lord presents these as means to convince humans of their duty and of God's righteousness in punishing them when they fail in their duty. These are also means to lead the elect to godliness and grant them the ordained blessings.

"I had said," in this context, means God had promised under the condition of obedience. "You have not obeyed, and I did not intend to give you an obedient heart, which I was not obligated to do and had decided not to give; therefore, you will not obtain the promises."

Is unchangeable.

XI. God's decree is unchangeable. If God were to change His decree, it would be either because, after making the decree, He saw that it was not good and something else was better, or because He was prevented from carrying out His decree by something else. Neither of these can be said of God. Not the first because He is the only wise God, and not the latter because He is Almighty. Thus, it is clear that there can be no cause for a change in the decree. Scripture conveys this in many places, consider just these:

- Malachi 3:6, "For I am the Lord, I do not change."
- James 1:17, "With whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."
- Isaiah 14:27, "The Lord of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it?"
- Isaiah 46:10, "My counsel shall stand."
- Romans 9:11, "That the purpose of God according to election might stand."
- Hebrews 6:17, "In which God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel."

Objection.

God is said to have repented, not to fulfill His promises or threats, to command differently than before, and to change His actions. Answer. But such expressions are never applied to God's decrees. These

expressions merely demonstrate the connection of things with the condition, whether expressed or implied, which God has firmly resolved to establish or command in each case and to allow the wicked not to fulfill them by their wickedness, resulting in them not receiving the promised blessings but suffering the threatened punishments. On the other hand, these expressions also work to ensure that the elect fulfill the condition and thus obtain the ordained blessings.

Encompasses everything and every particular thing.

XII. Having examined the qualities of the decree, we must consider the things it encompasses. It encompasses all things in general and each thing in particular. No matter how great or small, good or bad, whether it occurs according to the ordinary course of nature, or whether it is contingent and occurs by chance with respect to second causes, or whether it is executed by the free will of humans, such as wars and their outcomes, marriages and all their incidents, times and places of our dwelling, birthdays and death days—in short, everything, every angel, every lifeless creature in heaven and on earth, every human, every action, every outcome, and everything that exists under any name—it is all at a fixed and unalterable decree, some for the purpose of doing and executing, others for the purpose of permitting. This is what is taught throughout the Scriptures.

This is evident from:

1. The word "everything." Texts that generally include everything.
 - Acts 15:18, "Known to God from eternity are all His works."
 - Ephesians 1:11, "Who works all things according to the counsel of His will." The word "everything" includes all things; no thing is excluded.

2. The notation of many particular things, places, and times. Cross, blessings, election and rejection, and free will. a. Places that say this about particular things, such as places and times of everyone's dwelling. Acts 17:26, "Having determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings." b. All adversities that befall humans. Job 23:15, "He will complete what is appointed for me." c. The blessings that will be poured out upon the elect. Ephesians 1:5, 9, "Having predestined us to adoption as sons, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself." d. The election and rejection of individuals and nations. Romans 9:11-13, "That the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls. As it is written: 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.'" e. What is executed by the free will of humans, as evident from all that people did to Christ. Luke 22:22, "The Son of Man indeed goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!" Acts 2:23, "Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, crucified, and put to death." Acts 4:27, "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done." f. Marriage. Genesis 24:44, "This woman, whom the Lord has appointed for Isaac." Matthew 19:6, "So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together."

g. XIII. The time, place, manner, and circumstances of each person's death are determined. • This is explicitly stated in Scripture. Job 14:5, "Since his days are determined, the number of his months is with You; You have appointed his limits so that he cannot pass." Job

speaks about all people, a certain number of days and months, that this number is determined, and that no day or month will be added to it, meaning that one will not live longer than the appointed time. Psalm 39:5, 6, "Lord, make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am. Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths." David is not speaking about the brevity of life in general but specifically that God has set a measure for His life, a certain duration, and it is as if it were marked out by a handbreadth, meaning that His life was a short, predetermined period. Acts 17:26, "Having determined their preappointed times." • God Himself takes a person's life at the appointed time, just as He assigns each person's birthdate. God holds life and death in His hand, and He works everything according to His determined plan (Acts 2:23; Ephesians 1:11). Thus, a person's lifespan is determined (Psalm 31:16; Psalm 90:3; Psalm 76:12; 1 Samuel 2:6). Even if someone dies in a seemingly random way, it is still under God's providence. For instance, if someone is killed by a flying axe head during a woodcutting accident, God is directing that event (Exodus 21:13). God determined Ahab's lifespan, even though he was accidentally struck by an arrow (1 Kings 22:28, 34). Didn't God determine the lifespan of the people in the first world and the 185,000 soldiers in Sennacherib's army?

XIV. Objection 1: The length or shortness of a person's life depends on their good or bad behavior, and God lengthens or shortens it accordingly. Therefore, their death is not fixed. Exodus 20:12 says, "That your days may be long upon the land." Response: The extension of days mentioned here does not concern God's decree, which has set a limit for everyone's life. Instead, it indicates the connection God has established between godliness and blessing, both of which are decreed by God. One is the end, and the other is the means that God Himself works in them.

Objection 2: Psalm 55:23 says, "But You, O God, shall bring them down to the pit of destruction; bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days." This suggests that there is no fixed decree regarding a person's death. Response: If this passage refers to God's decree, then it implies a certain time of life has been determined because where there is a specific halfway point, there is also a definite end. Therefore, we must conclude that God has indeed determined the time of death for every person. However, some may argue that individuals can counteract God's fixed decree, which is impossible, as we have demonstrated. This passage might instead refer to the physical strength of the body, which could have allowed people to live much longer naturally. Alternatively, it could reflect their delusion about living a longer life, but God, in accordance with His decree, joined their end and the means, taking them away in their prime due to their wickedness. This interpretation is consistent with Ecclesiastes 7:17, which asks, "Why should you die before your time?"

Objection 3: Isaiah 38:5 says, "Behold, I will add fifteen years to your days." This indicates that there is no fixed decree concerning a person's lifespan. Response: In this case, there is indeed a specific extension of fifteen years added to Hezekiah's life. God had decreed that Hezekiah would not die during his illness but rather fifteen years later. If it weren't for a miraculous recovery after hearing the message of death, he would have naturally died according to the condition of his body.

Objection 4: People have their lives in their own hands. They can drown themselves or hang themselves whenever they want, thus shortening their lives, as some indeed do. Response: If someone takes such actions, it means that the time was determined by God. They become their own executioners as a punishment for their sins,

dying in wickedness. However, if someone's time has not come, they will not engage in such actions and will do their best to preserve their life. While a person can shorten their life concerning their natural state, God's decree remains unaltered.

Objection 5: If everyone's death is firmly determined, and a person will not die before their appointed time, then they need not use any means, such as eating, or they could throw themselves into water or fire without consequence. They wouldn't need to use medicine during illness, and so on. Response: God, who has determined the end, has also decreed the means to that end. He will lead people to use those means, both for the body and the soul. People willingly employ these means. However, they do not use them to change God's decree, as that would be foolish. Instead, they use them to fulfill God's purpose, as God has commanded us to use these means. Acts 27:31 states that without using the means, salvation is impossible. Furthermore, God uses these means as a test for His people, as stated in Ezekiel 36:37.

Objection 6: Since a person's will is entirely free to do or refrain from doing something, and almost everything depends on a person's will, and many things happen by chance, a person's time of death and place cannot be fixed. Moreover, if there were such a fixed decree of God over everything, everything would have to occur out of unavoidable necessity. Response:

(a) It is a mistake to believe that the freedom of the will lies in doing or not doing something; it does not depend on indifference but on spontaneity. A person does everything with consent and inclination, and God, who created the will in such a manner, inclines it willingly and without coercion in accordance with His nature to do whatever He wills.

(b) The outcome of events is not dependent on human effort or work but on God, who provides the means and determines the outcome according to His good pleasure. He grants one person more strength, wisdom, and wealth than another (Proverbs 22:2). God gives one king a larger army than another, and often God demonstrates that the outcome does not depend on strength, wisdom, wealth, or numbers but on Him (Proverbs 21:31; Psalm 33:16).

(c) All accidents and contingencies occur with respect to humans and second causes but not with respect to God, who has ordained everything with certainty and, without hindrance, carries out His decree according to His good pleasure, even in the most seemingly random events, such as sudden death (Exodus 21:12, 13), casting lots (Proverbs 16:33), or the falling of a sparrow from the roof and the loss of a hair from one's head (Matthew 10:29, 30).

(d) It is true that everything happens out of an unavoidable necessity, but not by compulsion. There are three types of necessity:

(1) Internal necessity arising from the nature of things, such as fire necessarily burning and heavy objects falling.

(2) Necessity arising from external coercion, such as a person forcibly pulling a child in a certain direction against their will.

(3) Necessity arising from dependence and outcome. It is necessary for a creature to depend on God in its actions, and every event has the outcome that God wills. God, having ordained everything, irresistibly brings everything to pass, not by coercion against the nature of things but in accordance with the nature of His creatures. Therefore, everything must necessarily occur according to God's decree, even though it may be contingent concerning second causes.

In this, there is much comfort.

XV. Let Socinians, Mennonites, Remonstrants, Jesuits, and all natural people who do not know God and His way reject and contradict these truths, attempting to dethrone God and make man master of everything. We cast down these arguments and every lofty opinion that raises itself against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). We defend this doctrine, so comforting and beneficial to the believers.

XVI. Believers may not all have the same clarity regarding these truths, even though they believe them. They are often subjected to temptations when they have a strong desire for something and pray for it. If things go wrong, if they face adversity, or if trials and tribulations threaten or afflict them, fear can overcome them, causing them to lose sight of God's decree. They may struggle to submit themselves lovingly and joyfully to God's decree, and they may perceive the Lord as being against them, having not decreed anything good for them. When they turn to prayer, they may be greatly hindered by thoughts like, "What good will my prayers do? I will not receive anything or be delivered except according to the decree. I fear that this decree is not for my good." As a result, their zeal is broken, and their prayers are hindered or weakened. This clearly indicates that God's decree is not yet beloved enough, that they work harder to bend God's will to their desires rather than aligning their desires with God's will. They wish for God to serve their counsel more than they seek to serve God's counsel. This troubles believers and stirs much turmoil within them. They would gladly believe in God's decree, take pleasure in it, believe that it is for their good in all things, and employ all means and prayers to obtain their holy desires, with the purpose of serving God's counsel, which

executes the ordained end through the appointed means. However, they are often hindered in doing so.

(a) Some hindered by ignorance, as they have not been sufficiently instructed in these truths or others.

(b) Some hindered by neglect, as they fail to meditate on this truth and make it their own.

(c) Some hindered by excessive and impure attachment to worldly matters.

(d) Some hindered by failing to make God's Word their own, so they do not have relevant passages at hand in different situations.

(e) Some hindered by getting too caught up in the means, depending on whether they seem favorable or unfavorable. All of these factors obscure their vision and provide space and strength for unbelief.

XVII. Do you desire to derive benefit from this comforting doctrine?

1. Self-denial. Free yourself from improper and overly strong attachment to earthly things and make great efforts to deny your own desires. After all, the earthly is not your portion, and it cannot truly satisfy you, can it? You have often experienced that it does not make you holier but rather robs you of all peace and the freedom of the Spirit. It hinders you from running your race with joy, and you have often seen in hindsight that it was God's wise goodness that did not grant your desires exactly as you wished. So why are you so fixated on your desires? Is it not much better to rest in God's decree?
2. Love for the Will of God. Foster a deep love for God's sovereignty. Do you truly wish God to be your servant, giving

you your foolish desires? Or is your joy found in the fact that He is the Lord, that He is free, that He rules everything according to His will as the Supreme Ruler, so that no one can thwart His hand or say, "What are You doing?" Do you truly wish for God to be bound to you and obligated to do your bidding? Is it not far more preferable that His will is executed without the slightest hindrance, both in everything and in you, whether it goes well or not, even if you and all that is yours were to be included in His plan? You surely approve of this when you calmly contemplate it. Therefore, rejoice in His sovereignty, give Him honor and glory, and you will rest sweetly in His decree, whether in regard to the future, the present, or the past.

3. Believe that everything is for the good. Consider and believe, in general, that God has decreed everything concerning His elect for their benefit, to an extent that they could not imagine or desire it for themselves. Embrace this truth and apply it to yourself. When you believe that you have a share in Jesus, God's decree will be sweet to you. You will be able to rest in it contentedly and easily entrust everything into the hands of the Lord, saying, "He fulfills over me what He has decreed for me; it will be well."
4. Use means to serve God's counsel. You do not know in advance what God has decreed for you in a particular matter, but you do know that God brings about His decree through means and has bound us to them. Therefore, if someone does not use the means, trusting that God will accomplish His decree regardless, they have no right to complain if their desires are not fulfilled because it is their own fault. "You do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:2). The promise is: "Ask, and it will be given to you" (Matthew 7:7). "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it"

(Psalm 81:11). Be cautious not to employ evil means, for that does not consider God's decree but expects results from the means themselves. Instead, use good means, solely to serve God's counsel, not to change it. Be unconcerned and calm about the outcome, knowing that the matter will have the outcome God has decreed for your good. By doing so, you will escape or overcome many temptations and maintain a peaceful heart.

XVIII. Embracing, believing, and becoming accustomed to this truth through deep contemplation, you will be well-prepared and strong in all circumstances. Your desires will become holy, anxieties will be moderated, and your use of means will be both free and cautious.

- When various evils arise, such as the threat or burden of poverty, loss, shame, enemy devastations, famine, pestilence, the loss of one's possessions, loved ones, or even one's own life, this decree brings tranquility. For it does not originate from humans but from God, in accordance with His eternal decree, which neither you nor anyone else can alter. That decree is for your good, even if you cannot foresee it in advance. Thus, you need not fear, even if everything is turned upside down.

- If you strongly desire something, contemplating this decree will not remove your desire but will sanctify it. It will allow you to approach God more freely, presenting your desires to Him, or it will lead you to submit humbly, saying, "Your will be done." Without pushing aggressively for your desires, you will find your desires absorbed in God's will.

- It will quickly reveal whether you harbor any impure desires, and they will be promptly extinguished. You will never wish to do wrong for the sake of achieving good, but instead, you will surrender everything into the hand of the Lord. You will be content with His

plan, give thanks to the Lord in all things, and say, "From Him, through Him, and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen" (Romans 11:36).

Chapter 6

On the Eternal Predestination of Election and Reprobation

Having discussed God's decrees in general, we now turn to God's specific decrees regarding the salvation and damnation of humankind. The word "predestination" or "preordination" has encountered some resistance, prejudice, and aversion due to frequent slander from malicious individuals, particularly among those with limited understanding or harboring much resentment. Consequently, some have questioned whether it might be better not to speak of this mystery. However, because Holy Scripture abundantly addresses this topic, and it holds immense importance in providing a comprehensive understanding of the entire path to salvation, serving as the source of comfort and pure sanctification, nothing should be withheld. The entire counsel of God must be proclaimed, and everyone should strive to understand and utilize this doctrine effectively.

II. The Scripture speaks of election in various ways.

(1) The Lord Jesus Christ is called the Chosen One, Isaiah 42:1. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, 1 Peter 1:20, to be the Mediator and Savior of the elect.

(2) The holy angels are chosen for an eternal and enduring state of blessedness but not in Christ, nor considered as Mediator because there was and would be no sin among them, nor as their Head to preserve and establish their state because the Scripture never mentions it. The Lord Jesus is given for the salvation of people, not angels. However, as God and man, Christ is exalted above the angels, who worship Him, and whom He uses as the Lord for the benefit of the elect. These holy angels God has chosen, which is why they are called the chosen ones, 1 Timothy 5:21, in contrast to other angels who sinned, did not keep their beginning, and left their dwelling place, and are therefore eternally damned, 2 Peter 2:4, Jude 1:6, Matthew 25:41.

(3) Some people are chosen for a particular office, either in the State, like Saul as King, 1 Samuel 10:24. "Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen?" And in contrast, those rejected, 1 Samuel 16:17. "I have rejected him." Or in the church, as Judas was also chosen as an apostle, John 6:70. "Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil."

(4) We are not discussing this kind of election here, but rather the election of certain individuals to salvation in contrast to others who are rejected by God.

III. Election is expressed with various words, such as:

1. Proörismos, predestination, in Latin Praedestinatio. This word means to order or appoint something before it happens, to bring it to a certain end. Acts 4:28. To do whatever your hand and your plan, proóórise, had predestined (preordained) to take place. See also: 1 Corinthians 2:7. God has predestined this hidden wisdom for our glory before time began. This word is used regarding the appointment of people to salvation and the

means by which they obtain it. Ephesians 1:11, 5. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will. Romans 3:29, 30. He has predestined them to be conformed to the image of his Son. And those whom he predestined he also called. This word denotes not only election but also rejection, as seen in passages where it is used concerning Herod, Pilate, and Judas. Acts 4:28. Luke 22:22. The Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!

2. Prognosis, foreknowledge. This word does not merely refer to God's foreknowledge, by which He knows all things, including the end of people, Acts 15:18. God has known His works from eternity. Instead, it means foreknowledge with love and delight. Thus, Christ is said to have been foreknown as the Chosen One of God before the foundation of the world, 1 Peter 1:20. So the Lord knows the way of the righteous, Psalm 1:6. Thus the Lord knows those who are His, 2 Timothy 2:19. Believers are called elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, 1 Peter 1:2. And it also denotes election itself: Romans 11:2. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Romans 8:29. Those whom he foreknew he also predestined. This foreknowledge is set in contrast to "not known," signifying rejection. Matthew 7:23. "I never knew you." Matthew 25:12. "I do not know you."
3. Prothesis, purpose. This word does not imply a powerless wish but a firm, unchanging, and unbreakable decision. It is used regarding the election of the Lord Jesus as a Mediator. Romans 3:25. Whom God put forward as a propitiation. It is also used concerning the elect: in relation to the means by which they are brought to salvation. Romans 8:28. Those who are called

according to his purpose. As for the end: Romans 9:11. In order that God's purpose of election might continue. Ephesians 1:11. We have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.

4. Eklogē, election. Although this word is used in other contexts, it frequently means the appointment to salvation and to the means by which they obtain salvation. Romans 9:11. The purpose of God, in election. Romans 11:5. So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. 1 Thessalonians 1:4. Knowing, brothers loved by God, your election. In this context, believers are called the elect. Matthew 22:14. Few are chosen. Romans 8:33. Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? They are also referred to as the election. Romans 11:27. The elect (Greek: election) obtained it. Those whom God has chosen to the end, He has also chosen for the means, which is also expressed by the term "chosen." John 15:16, 19. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit. I chose you out of the world.

IV. Moving from the word, we now turn to the matter; we will present it in a description and explain it step by step. Predestination or preordination is an eternal, voluntary, and unchangeable decision of God to create some people for the glorification of His free grace, to place them under sin, bring them to salvation through Christ, and, for the glorification of His justice, to create others, let them fall into sin, and condemn sin.

V. Preordination is a decision of God. Everything we have said about God's decisions in the previous chapter in general must also apply to

this specific one, namely, that it is eternal, voluntary, wise, and absolutely unchangeable.

Cause.

The cause is God. Romans 8:30. Those whom He predestined. Ephesians 1:5. He predestined us. God is self-sufficient, having no need to create creatures. It is solely His goodness that He desires to share His goodness with creatures, endowing angels and humans with intellect and will, not only for their own pleasure but for their happiness in communion with God and in the sight and knowledge of God's perfections. Blessed is he whom God has chosen for this purpose!

Purpose

The purpose that God had in preordination is His glorification in His grace and mercy, as well as in His justice. Not that anything is added to His glory by this, but rather that angels and humans may find their blessedness in seeing and acknowledging this salvation. Even among humans, a wise man does nothing without a specific purpose. A builder will not first gather stones, wood, and various building materials without a purpose or plan and then decide what to do with them. Instead, he first aims to build a house and, to achieve that goal, he assembles the necessary materials. Thus, the ultimate end is first in the intention and last in the execution. This holds even more true for the infinitely wise God. Would He first decide to create people and subject them to sin without any further purpose and then decide what He would do with those people? No, He first determines the end, namely, the glorification of His grace and justice. To achieve this end, God preordains the means, which include creating people and subjecting them to sin. This is clearly expressed in Scripture. Romans 9:22, 23. What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to

make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory? Here, the apostle emphatically presents God's purpose, which is to demonstrate His wrath and the riches of His glory. He then presents the means to achieve this end, namely, vessels of wrath prepared for destruction and vessels of mercy prepared for glory.

Regarding Election.

VI. Just as God does in time, He has decreed to do from eternity; in time, God elects some for salvation from the corrupted mass of humanity and brings them to Christ their Redeemer, making them blessed through Him. Thus, He has decreed to do so from eternity. However, as means to His purpose, the glorification of His mercy and justice, that was the end; God decreed to make people blessed and, for that purpose, to create them, subject them to sin, and redeem them through Christ. So, if we consider preordination in its entirety, encompassing both the end and the means by which the end is executed, both sin and Christ are included in it. Even though we may contemplate them separately or one after the other, we know that God decrees everything with a single act, encompassing all. However, in terms of the order of events, the end and the means are distinguished.

On Rejection.

So, God has also decreed to be glorified in His justice, and to achieve this end, He has decreed to create people, allow them to sin by their own fault, and in justice, condemn them for their sins. God did not create one person for salvation and another for damnation; rather, He created the entire human race in perfect holiness, with respect to the end of the matter, namely, salvation. I say, with respect to the

end of the matter; the holy state had as its end the salvation that would have led all people to salvation if humanity had remained in that state.

The end of the matter or the work should not be confused with the end of the Worker, for God did not create all people with the intention of saving them all because then they would all attain salvation, given that God's counsel stands, and He always achieves His purpose. God does not prevent anyone from attaining salvation; rather, it is the individual who excludes themselves by sinning voluntarily.

The election of some to salvation does not harm others. Rejection is not the cause of someone's sinning or being damned; it is the person's own doing, nor is it the cause of someone being condemned, but rather sin. It is true that those who are not chosen will not be saved, but it is also true that only sinners will be condemned. It is also true that if someone repents, believes in Christ, and lives a holy life, they will not be condemned but saved. It is the individual's own fault if they do not do so, and it is God's free grace if He converts someone, brings them to Christ, and sanctifies them.

Answering a Slander From this, it is evident that it is a vile slander to say that the Church teaches that one person is created for salvation and another for damnation, or that one person, no matter how much good they do, will be damned while another, no matter how much evil they do, will be saved. Far be it from the Almighty to be unjust! It is only His goodness and holiness that He has decided to make His grace and justice known to people. It is solely His holiness that leads people to salvation through Christ and the path of holiness. It is solely His holiness to leave those who sin by their own fault in their sins and to condemn sin. That someone becomes godly and believes

is not the work of evil people, for they desire only to do evil. Instead, it is the work of God's grace, which God alone accomplishes in the chosen ones.

Eternal and Voluntary

VII. Preordination is:

(a) from eternity, before the foundation of the world. Romans 8:30. Those whom He predestined. Ephesians 1:4.

(b) voluntary. God was not compelled by anything external or internal to ordain people to their end; it was solely His good pleasure. Matthew 9:22. Thus it was the good pleasure before You. And that God ordains some to be brought to salvation through Christ and others to be condemned for their sins is also solely His prerogative. Romans 9:21. Or does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

(c) wise, ordaining suitable means to execute that end. Romans 11:33. O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! The apostle exclaims about preordination in this chapter.

(d) independent, absolute, without any condition. God carries out this decision through means, but the means are not the condition; the decision is not dependent on the means. It is not made secure or uncertain by the means. Rather, God Himself directs the means to His firm, unchanging, and unshakable purpose. And that purpose He has made from Himself, according to His good pleasure, to which all means must conform. Romans 9:11-13. For the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls;

it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."

(e) unchangeable. Since God's purpose was taken from eternity, not based on any condition of human goodness or wickedness but solely according to God's good pleasure, it is impossible for it to change. For God Himself is unchanging, wise, and almighty. Therefore, Romans 8:30, Those whom He predestined ... these He also glorified. Romans 9:21-23.

Consists of Election and Rebrobation.

VIII. Preordination consists of two parts, namely, election and reprobation, as is evident from passages where they are both mentioned. Romans 9:22, 23. Vessels of wrath prepared for destruction. Vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory. Romans 11:7. The elect obtained it, and the rest were hardened. 1 Thessalonians 5:9. God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation.

IX. Election is expressed by various words.

1. As purpose, foreknowledge, preordination. Romans 8:28, 29. Those who are called according to His purpose. Whom He foreknew, He also predestined.
2. Ordained to eternal life. Acts 13:48. As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.
3. Enrollment in the book of life. Luke 10:20. Rejoice because your names are written in heaven.
4. Appointment to salvation, 1 Thessalonians 5:9.
5. Election, Ephesians 1:4. Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.

Description.

X. Election is a preordination of God, by which God from eternity has firmly and unchangeably decreed to bring certain individuals by name, without any foresight of faith or good works, solely out of His free good pleasure, to eternal salvation, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

XI.

(a) Election is a work of God.

The eternal God, who is self-sufficient, has been pleased to impart His goodness and, for this purpose, has chosen some individuals. He has chosen us, Ephesians 1:3. He has appointed us to obtain salvation, 1 Thessalonians 5:9. Therefore, they are called His elect, Luke 18:7. God does not appear here as a Judge, passing judgment on human deeds and justifying or condemning based on them, but as a sovereign Lord, acting according to His good pleasure, choosing some and rejecting others.

From Eternity.

(b) Election has taken place from eternity.

God chooses some in time through effectual calling, transferring them from a state of nature to a state of grace. John 15:16. I have chosen you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit. But this choosing calling flows from an eternal purpose. Romans 8:28. So the decision of election is not made in time when a person is already there, believes, and lives godly. Instead, it was made before the person had done any good. Romans 9:11. From eternity before the foundation of the world. Ephesians 1:4. Just as He chose us in Him

before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Ephesians 3:11. According to the eternal purpose that He accomplished in Christ. 2 Timothy 1:9. According to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.

Concerning People in Particular.

(c) Election pertains to specific individuals: God has made a distinction among people. Matthew 20:16. Many are called, but few are chosen. Romans 11:7. The elect, the others. The elect are particular individuals with specific names, in contrast to others who are not chosen. God has not chosen qualities or attributes, not such and such, not believers, the godly, but those with specific names. Romans 8:29, 30. Whom He predestined, these He also called. 2 Timothy 2:19. The Lord knows those who are His. Philippians 4:3. Whose names are written in the Book of Life.

No Foreseen Faith.

(d) Election did not happen because of Christ's merits, foreseen faith, or foreseen good works; these are fruits flowing from election but not causes of election. They do not precede election but follow it. Nothing compelled God; nothing in or done by humans motivated Him to choose anyone. It was solely His freedom and good pleasure. Ephesians 1:9, 5. According to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself. Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. This alone is the source of election, but in its execution, God uses means. God allows the human race to come under sin and guilt, and in time, God draws His elect out of that state, showing them His grace; in this regard, election is called "election of grace." Romans 11:5, 6. Even so then, at this present time, there is a remnant according to the

election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer of works. Because God has chosen some, He bestows Christ upon them to bring them to God and salvation in a manner befitting God. John 17:6. They were Yours, and You gave them to Me. In this regard, election was made in Christ. Ephesians 1:4, 5, 6. Just as He chose us in Him. Predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ. Made us accepted in the Beloved.

Election does not result from any foreseen faith or good works; both flow from election as means to bring the elect to their ordained salvation. Consider faith in this context. Acts 13:48. As many as were ordained to eternal life believed. Therefore, faith is called the faith of the elect. Titus 1:1. Now, regarding good works, see Ephesians 1:4. He chose us, not because we were this way or because God saw us as such, but so that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love. Whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, these He called, justified, glorified. Romans 8:29, 30.

Is Unchangeable.

(e) Election is unchangeable. Humans will not alter this decree because election did not occur based on any condition, and because God Himself works in the elect what pleases Him, leading them to salvation. God Himself will not change this decree from within Himself because with the Lord, there is no variation or shadow of turning. James 1:17. The wisdom and omnipotence of the Lord make His counsel stand; that's why the Scripture speaks of the unchangeableness of His counsel. Hebrews 6:17. So that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie. Romans 9:11. The counsel of God stands. 2 Timothy 2:19. Whom He predestined, these He also glorified. Romans 8:30.

For the Glory of God.

(f) The end of election is the glorification of God, not to bring glory to Him, for He is perfect, but to reveal all His glorious perfections that manifest in the work of redemption to angels and humans, so they may find salvation in contemplating them. And that everything may be brought to Him as the end in which everything culminates, to praise and honor Him, thus giving Him honor and glory. The end is to be glorified in His saints and to be marveled at in all who believe. 2 Thessalonians 1:10. It is to the praise of the glory of His grace. Ephesians 1:6. The apostle exclaims about this: For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen. Romans 11:36.

Reprobation.

Various Designations.

XII. The other part of preordination is rejection, which is expressed with various words, such as:

1. Rejecting. Isaiah 41:9. I have chosen you, and have not rejected you.
2. Prepared for destruction. Romans 9:22.
3. Appointed for wrath. 1 Thessalonians 5:6.
4. Written for judgment. Jude 1:4.
5. Not written in the book of life. Revelation 13:8. These texts immediately prove that there is a rejection.

Description. XIII. Rejection is a preordination of certain individuals, by name, to eternal destruction, out of pure good pleasure, to demonstrate God's righteousness in punishing them for their sins.

Concerns Specific Individuals. XIV.

(a) Just as election concerns specific individuals, as has been shown and will be further demonstrated, so does rejection. For their names are not written in the book of life. Revelation 17:8. Christ says to specific individuals: you are not of My sheep. John 10:26. They are referred to with the relative word "those," Jude 1:4. Some people who were previously written for this same judgment. Therefore, some are also named. Esau, Romans 9:13. Pharaoh, Romans 9:17. Judas Iscariot, Acts 1:25. The number of these rejected individuals far exceeds the number of the elect, who, in contrast to these, and even the called, are referred to as few. Matthew 20:16.

Out of Free Good Pleasure.

(b) Reprobation solely flows from the good pleasure of God. Their wickedness is indeed the cause of their damnation, but it is not the cause that moved God to make a decision to reject them for the glorification of His righteousness; it is solely the good pleasure of God, who has the right and power to do as He pleases with His own, and no one may say, "Why have you made me like this?" Romans 9:20. According to His pleasure, God hides the way of salvation. Matthew 11:25, 26. He has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills. Romans 9:18. The purpose is firm. Before the children had done anything good or evil. Romans 9:11. Therefore, it is God's freedom and good pleasure to demonstrate His righteousness to these and His grace to others. Romans 9:22, 23. God will indeed protect His holiness and righteousness; believers know that God is just, and all His actions are righteous. Anyone who wants to contend with God about this may do so.

For the Glory of God's Righteousness.

(c) Just as God's freedom is evident in making such a decision, so the end is the demonstration of God's righteousness, revealed in its execution. He who determines the end also determines the means to achieve it. God did not decide to condemn certain individuals for any reason other than sin. God allows them to fall away from God through their own fault and become slaves to sin. They, having sinned, come under the curse that was threatened against sin. Since God redeems some from sin and the curse through the Atoner Jesus Christ, He leaves the rest in that state. From this, it follows that they do not listen to God and do not believe in Him. John 8:47. Therefore, you do not listen because you are not of God. John 10:26. You do not believe because you are not among my sheep. Because of sin, God punishes them as a just Judge on the day of wrath and the revelation of God's righteous judgment. Romans 2:5. Thus, God demonstrates His wrath against vessels of wrath prepared for destruction. Romans 9:22.

XV. So far, we have explained this matter. This doctrine has many opponents, including Roman Catholics, although not all, Remonstrants, Lutherans, and others.

The View of the Remonstrants. The Remonstrants arose in the early part of the previous century and were condemned by the National Synod, which can rightly be called a General Synod, held in Dordrecht in the years 1618 and 1619, and subsequently expelled from the Reformed Church.

- First, they posit a general and unlimited decision to save the believers and those persevering in good works and to damn all the wicked; they call this the antecedent will of God.
- Second, they claim that, in consideration of Christ's universal satisfaction, taking into account faith and perseverance in good

works, which they say are within the power of human free will, which God foresees through means knowledge, what each person will or will not do, God, they say, was thereby moved to decide to save such individuals and, through foreseen unbelief, wickedness, and apostasy to the end, was moved to decide to damn such individuals, and that no one, because he does not know if he will persevere, even though he is now faithful and godly, can be assured of his salvation.

Roman Catholics.

Regarding this matter, Roman Catholics do not agree but fiercely disagree with each other. Some are nearly orthodox on this matter, while others agree with the Remonstrants. First, the conflict was between the Franciscans and Dominicans, and then between the Jesuits and Jansenists. The former advocate election based on grace, while the latter drive election based on works. Even among the latter, there are differences: some believe that election to grace is based solely on grace, but election to glory is based on works, while others believe that both are based on works.

Lutherans.

Lutherans do not strictly adhere to Luther's views, although he was pure in this matter, even though he used overly harsh expressions. They propose two decisions.

- The first, according to them, is the election of Christ as a universal Savior of the entire human race, and thus they posit an election of all people to save them all through Christ, giving them sufficient means of salvation, calling them to Christ, and saving them on the condition of faith and repentance. So, all could be saved if they wanted to believe in Christ and repent.

However, the majority of people reject this offer and, as a result, are lost.

- In addition to this, they propose another decision of election, namely, that from eternity, out of His free grace, God has chosen certain individuals by name for salvation in Christ, who would serve as the foundation of election, paying for them as their Substitute and obtaining salvation. Others also contend that God chooses based on foreseen faith, either as a motivating cause or as a means, as in justification. Furthermore, they believe that the elect, being born, are dead in sins and crimes and have no strength to repent and believe in Christ. But according to the decision of election, God converts them each in their time, grants them faith, and preserves them in salvation. So, even though the elect, after being born again, can completely fall away and become dead in sins and crimes again, they cannot ultimately fall away because, according to His eternal and unchanging decision, God restores them to faith and regeneration before their death, so that a regenerate person can be assured of their salvation.

Amyraldians.

Amyraldus and those who follow him claim to have found a middle ground to remove the offensiveness of the true doctrine. They propose two decisions.

- A general one, in which God, having compassion on the entire human race, has decided to send Christ into the world, so that through His satisfaction, He would obtain forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation for all people on the condition of believing in Him and not despising such salvation. So, in some sense, God

desires the salvation of all people, and every person could be saved if they so desired.

- In addition, they add a specific decision by which God, out of His free grace, has chosen certain individuals by name for salvation, to which He certainly brings them, giving them faith and repentance even though they have no natural ability for it, and by His power preserving them in it. From this, a regenerate person can be assured of their salvation. In the first, they agree with the Remonstrants and Lutherans; in the second, they are orthodox. From the presentation of the views of the parties, it is clear that the difference is not about a single point but that various matters are mixed together, which are in dispute, and therefore we will present and discuss them individually.

Socinians. The Socinians posit two elections: a general one of the godly, which they believe to be from eternity, and a particular one that would happen in time.

XVI. Question:

1. Whether God from eternity has taken a general purpose to have compassion on the entire fallen human race and ordain Christ as a Savior for all and each one, calling them all to Him and His blessed communion with Him?

The opinions of the parties can be seen in the previous paragraph (15), and in what sense each one says yes to it; however, they all agree that God did not absolutely intend and purpose in this decision to save all people, seeing that not all people would certainly obtain salvation, which refutes the outcome. We answer that God hates no creature except for sin, and God has a general benevolence toward His creatures, considering each in its kind, sustaining and governing them in such a way that He does not leave Himself without a witness

to sinners, doing them good, and filling their hearts with righteousness and joy (Acts 14:17). God takes pleasure in the conversion of people, in their faith in Christ, in their prayers, almsgiving, and sanctification because these are the beginnings of the restoration of the image of God in man. But we deny such general grace or purpose to have compassion on all people and to ordain Christ as a universal Savior for all people and to present Christ to all people. For the following reasons:

(1) The execution is not universal. What God does in time, He has also decreed from eternity (Ephesians 1:11). However, God does not have compassion on all people in time (Romans 9:18). He has not sent Christ into the world as a Savior for all but only for His elect, for Christ has suffered as a Substitute and High Priest. The merits of Christ and their application are inseparable; the first is not broader than the latter, and the Scripture limits Christ's death to some. See this discussed at length in Chapter 22 on the Satisfaction of Christ. God also does not offer Christ to all people; He does not call them all. He makes known His words to Jacob; His judgments they do not know (Psalm 147:19, 20). Christ affirms this in Matthew 11:25, 26. "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will." Daily experience unquestionably confirms this; therefore, we conclude that God did not make a general compassionate decision from eternity; He did not ordain Christ as a Savior for all and did not purpose to offer Christ to all people.

Election and rejection are opposed to each other; both have their specific objects. Election is of specific individuals by name; rejection is also of specific individuals by name, as shown in the previous sections (paragraphs 11 and 14 in c). Thus, a general decision to have

compassion on all and send Christ to all cannot take place. One cannot say that this is well-established in the second and subsequent decision, but that the second does not remove an earlier, general decision, for the Scripture speaks nowhere of a first and second decision, much less of a first decision being overturned by a second. God's decision is unchangeable. If, in His eternal decree, God has appointed some to wrath, prepared for destruction, and written them down for judgment, then there was no prior decision to have compassion on them.

3. Such general grace contains various absurdities within itself, from which absurdities flow, which are even absurd and unreasonable. For:

(a) This general will to save all people implies that God wills what He does not will. Anyone who truly, earnestly, and vehemently desires something also accomplishes it when they can. God can immediately save all people, but He does not will it, as is evident from the outcome. So, if God has a will to save all people, He wills the same thing and does not will the same thing in the same respects.

(b) This general will to save all people is either absolute or conditional. If absolute, then God misses His purpose because not all people are saved. If conditional, then God either wants to fulfill that condition or merely demands it. If God wants to fulfill the condition itself, then all people would be immediately saved, which is untrue. If God does not want to fulfill the condition but only demands it, then God does not genuinely will the salvation of all people because God knows that the sinful human being is entirely incapable of meeting the condition due to their spiritual death, blindness, unwillingness, and powerlessness. In that case,

God would earnestly and vehemently will something that He knows will never happen.

(c) If there is a general will in God to save all people, then God could be deceived in His purpose, and His will could be thwarted from achieving what He desires. He wills something that does not happen: the salvation of all people. It is different when God commands something and declares that obeying it will be pleasing to Him; it is beyond dispute that people do not obey that commanding will. The difference lies in deciding and aiming at something, and it is the deciding and aiming will that is discussed in this dispute. A willing and deciding will is deceived when it does not obtain what it wills. If God wills the salvation of all people in His decision, then God is deceived in His purpose, and He does not attain what He willed and decided. Because these things are unreasonable, it is also unreasonable to posit a general deciding will in God to save all people.

XVII. The reasons given by the parties for general grace are answered in the discussion of the satisfaction of Christ, Chapter 22. Here, we will briefly address some of them and show that they do not serve as evidence for a general grace decree.

Objection 1.

Ezekiel 33:11. "As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Answer. This text does not speak of God's decree, which is always certainly executed, and in which God always achieves His end. Instead, it speaks of God's delight in the repentance of human beings, through which a person is restored to God's image and

likeness, and of God's displeasure with a person's impenitence and corruption, insofar as it pertains to His creation.

Objection 2.

John 3:16. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." John 6:51. "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." 2 Corinthians 5:19. "That is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them." 1 John 2:2. "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world."

Answer.

(a) These passages do not speak of God's eternal decree, which is the subject of this dispute, but of the sending of Christ for the benefit of humanity.

(b) The word "world" here means people, the human race, to whom God's love extends. The human race is the object of God's love and benevolence. It does not mean that God loves every individual in the world, that Christ imparts spiritual life to every person, or that God does not impute sins to anyone, as is evident from the ordinary language of the Bible. The first world perished in the flood (Luke 17:27), yet Noah and his family remained alive. The devil deceived the entire world (Revelation 12:9), and the whole world lies in evil (1 John 5:19). This does not imply that there were no believers in the world, or that there was not one person on earth who was not deceived by the devil and did not lie in evil. Christ says, "I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom

you have given me, for they are yours" (John 17:9). This does not mean that there is not one person on earth for whom Christ prays; rather, it means that by the word "world," we must understand those individuals who are the subject of each particular text. Sometimes it refers to a multitude of people (John 12:19, "The whole world has gone after him"). Other times it refers to the wicked in contrast to the elect (John 17:9). At times, it refers to the elect in contrast to others (2 Corinthians 5:19). Those who are reconciled with God, to whom God does not impute their sins, are not the wicked but the elect, and they are referred to as the world.

Objection 3.

Romans 11:32. "For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all." Romans 5:18. "Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men." 1 Corinthians 15:22. "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." 2 Corinthians 5:15. "And he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised." 1 Timothy 2:4-6. "Who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time." 2 Peter 3:9. "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

Answer.

Refer to the response to each text in Chapter XXII.

(a) The word "all" does not mean all people who have ever existed, currently exist, or will come into existence; rather, it means all those individuals about whom each specific text is speaking. Romans 5:18 speaks of all who belong to Christ, upon whom the justification of life comes. Romans 11:32 speaks of the rejection and reception or conversion of the Jewish nation. 1 Corinthians 15:22 speaks of all who are made alive in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:15 speaks of all believers who have died to sin and now live spiritually. 1 Timothy 2:4-6 speaks of all kinds of people, as is evident from verse 2 ("for kings and all who are in high positions"), but not all of them come to the knowledge of the truth. What God wills in His decree will certainly happen, and what does not happen, God does not will in His decree. Now, not all people are saved, but only those for whom Christ was given as a ransom. 2 Peter 3:9 speaks of the elect who come to repentance, who must first be gathered before the world perishes. It also speaks of the command and proclamation of the Gospel, urging everyone who hears it to repent, as well as God's pleasure and displeasure with repentance or impenitence.

Christ Chosen for the Chosen Ones.

XVIII. The proponents of universal grace posit that Christ is the foundation and cause of election, as seen above in paragraph 14. Therefore, it is necessary for us to answer this question: Does the election of Christ precede the election of individuals, so that God was moved by the merits of Christ to choose people, or does the election of individuals precede, and Christ is chosen to carry out the election of people? The proponents of universal grace assert the former, while we affirm the latter. Christ, in our view, comes into the election as the Executor of the election, as the earned Cause of the salvation to which the elect are ordained, but not as the moving Cause. Why?

1. Christ is chosen for the sake of the elect, to be their Mediator, Redeemer, and Savior, as stated in 1 John 4:10, "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." John 3:16 also emphasizes, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son." These texts clearly state that the giving of the Son flows from and is the result of God's love for the elect. It is well-known in nature that the cause is logically prior to the effect, the end precedes the means to achieve the end, and the object precedes the action toward the object. Thus, the love of God for the elect and their election precede the ordination of the Redeemer given to them, as in Isaiah 9:5, who was given for their redemption and salvation, foreknown and revealed for their sake, as in 1 Peter 1:20. The Lord also affirms this in John 17:6, "They were yours, and you gave them to me." Therefore, they belonged to the Father before they were given to the Son as the Redeemer and Mediator, and thus, they are elected before the Redeemer, who is chosen for their salvation.
2. Election has no other cause than the pleasure of God. Ephesians 1:9-11 states, "making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will." Election is presented here as the matter foreordained, and the elect are said to have been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, according to His pleasure. There is no other cause that might have moved God. In addition, the means by which God would execute that purpose is mentioned, namely, "to unite all things

in him," in Christ. Thus, Christ is the ordained means by which those chosen according to God's free pleasure are made partakers of the ordained salvation, and, therefore, He is not the moving cause and the foundation upon which the election is based. The same is evident from:

- Luke 12:32: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."
- Matthew 11:26: "Yes, Father, for such was your gracious will."
- Romans 9:11: "Though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls."

Objection 1.

XIX. Ephesians 1:4 - "Even as he chose us in him." 2 Timothy 1:9 - "Grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal."

Response.

(a) To be chosen in Christ is to become partakers of all spiritual blessings through Christ, as the apostle clearly expresses it in verse 3. As 1 Thessalonians 5:9 puts it, "For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." The act of setting us apart for salvation is the main issue, and this is carried out through Christ as the means. Therefore, being in Christ is not for the sake of Christ Himself, but through Christ. He chose us to be saved through Christ. Before anyone is in Christ, they belong to the Father, as John 17:6 says, "They were yours, and you gave them to me."

(b) Grace is given in Christ before the ages, not immediately, because the elect did not exist at that time. Instead, it ordains to give grace to them in time through Christ, who is the executor of salvation. Thus, there is no semblance of proof that Christ is the moving cause and foundation of election.

Objection 2. Romans 8:29 - "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."

Response.

(a) The apostle explicitly establishes foreknowledge preceding predestination. "For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image, etc."

(b) To be conformed to the image of his Son occurs in time and is a work of execution, not a work of the decree. The apostle states that God ordained from eternity that those foreknown from eternity would become conformed to the image of Christ in time. However, it does not suggest that God, in election, formed them after the image of His Son. If there were such a text, their argument might have some semblance, but as it stands, it does not.

(c) Christ is referred to as the firstborn among many brothers, but not as the first Chosen One. That would need to be proven. The apostle speaks here of the beginning of the salvation of the elect, who are the sons of God. Jesus Christ, both the meritorious cause of salvation and the example to whom the elect are conformed in time, concerning both suffering and life, is indeed the firstborn in the actual execution and in excellence.

Election is for specific individuals.

XX. Question III. Whether God has chosen certain individuals by name? The Remonstrants assert that God has chosen all people conditionally based on faith, repentance, and perseverance, all dependent on the free will of individuals. They propose that election is God's will to save all believers and the godly while rejection is God's will to damn all unbelievers and the ungodly, without specifying particular names. They further suggest that God, through middle knowledge, knows who will want to believe and who will not, and from that, He knows who will be saved and who will not.

However, we affirm that God has chosen specific individuals by name, up to a determined number. God has decided to send Christ as a Mediator for them and has resolved to efficaciously call them to Christ, grant them faith and repentance, preserve them in His power, and thus bring about their immediate salvation. This is evident in the following:

Proof

1. Proörizein, predestine in advance. XXI. The word "Proörizein," predestine in advance, which is often used in connection with election (see Romans 8:29, 30; Ephesians 1:5, 11), signifies the determination of someone in particular for something.

- Acts 4:28: "to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place."
- Acts 2:23: "this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God."
- Hebrews 4:7: "he again appoints a certain day."
- Acts 17:26: "having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place." Since God uses this word in relation to election, it means that He has appointed particular individuals, by name, for the election of salvation. This is also

evident in the word "choose" (Greek: Eklogē), which means to select. Removing the selection aspect eliminates the idea of choosing; but choosing involves picking one or some out of many according to one's pleasure. Therefore, when Scripture states that God has chosen people for salvation from eternity, it does not refer to everyone but to specific individuals, named as such.

2. From the enrollment of some names in the book of life. The children of Israel had genealogical and name records, from which everyone could prove their lineage. Similarly, God is ascribed a book called the book of life (Revelation 3:5). In this book, the names of the reprobate are not recorded (Revelation 13:8). However, in this book, the names of the elect for salvation are written. See Luke 10:20: "But rejoice that your names are written in heaven." Revelation 21:27 states that those whose names are written in the book of life will enter the New Jerusalem. The Father chose them and wrote their names in His book, then handed them over to the Son for redemption. The Son received them and transferred them to His book, which is called the book of the Lamb. Also, see Philippians 4:3, which mentions individuals whose names are in the book of life. This couldn't be clearer—there is no mention of any condition or quality here, no reference to good or evil, believers or unbelievers in general. Instead, each person's name is found written in the book of life, and those whose names are inscribed are mentioned by name, while others are not. Thus, election pertains to specific individuals.
3. A contrast with others. This is also evident from the contrast, not of qualities, but of persons. Matthew 20:16 states, "Many are called, but few are chosen." Romans 11:7 adds, "The elect

obtained it, but the rest were hardened." Nowhere does it say that God has chosen qualities and rejected qualities, nor does it say that God has chosen such and such qualities in people and rejected others. Instead, whenever election is discussed, it is always spoken of in terms of specific individuals. For instance, Romans 9:13 declares, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." While this could be applied to their descendants, some of whom were included in the church and others rejected, even from the administration of means of grace, the text speaks of their persons in the context of eternal election and rejection, as is evident from the context of the passage. Moreover, several passages, while not naming specific persons, refer to "us," "those," and "these."

- Ephesians 1:4: "Even as he chose us."
- Romans 8:29: "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined." These words indicate individuals, not qualities. Similarly, 2 Timothy 2:19 asserts, "The Lord knows those who are his."

Objection 1.

XXII. If God had chosen specific individuals, their names should be explicitly mentioned in the Bible because it contains the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). Answer. Some names are mentioned, as demonstrated. It is sufficient that their names are written in the book of life. Scripture reveals to us the entire counsel of God, as far as necessary to believe, live holy lives, and find comfort.

Objection 2.

All of God's promises are conditional, so election must also be conditional because what God does in time, He also determined from

eternity, and if there are conditional promises in time, there must be conditional election in eternity. Answer. We reject this consequence. The presence of conditional promises does not necessitate a conditional election. God's decree and the administration of the Gospel are distinct matters. It is true that as God acts in time, so He has determined from eternity, and because He gives conditional promises in time, He has also determined to give conditional promises from eternity. This follows, but it does not mean that there is a conditional election.

Objection 3.

If God had made such a particular and absolute decree of election, He would not give commands to the elect as conditions for obtaining salvation, accompanied by threats of damnation if they do not fulfill those commands, as commonly found in the Word. Answer. There is no logical connection between the two. For He who has certainly decreed the end has also decreed the means to bring the elect to that end. The way now is faith and repentance, which God presents to them and uses promises and threats to motivate them, confirming these by His Spirit.

Objection 4.

If there were an election of specific individuals, the Gospel could not be presented to everyone indefinitely, and the rejected could not be commanded to believe in Christ with the promise of salvation. This is contradictory: not wanting someone to have salvation and yet promising them salvation if they believe in Christ. Therefore, God has not chosen specific individuals by name.

Answer.

The existence of such a particular election has been irrefutably demonstrated. It is also true that the Gospel is offered indefinitely with a conditional promise of salvation based on faith and repentance. There is no contradiction here, as one is absolute, the other conditional; one is a decree, the other a command. It is God's goodness to present the Gospel with a conditional promise to the unconverted, and it is the duty of people to obey that Gospel. Election does not hinder them, but their own wickedness does, and thus God is glorified when He condemns them for their disobedience.

Not Based on Foreseen Faith or Good Works.

XXIII. Question IV. Whether election happened solely by God's free pleasure without being moved by anything external, or whether it happened based on foreseen faith and good works?

Many Roman Catholics, Remonstrants, and many Lutherans assert the latter (paragraph 15). We maintain that faith and holiness are the means through which God carries out the decree of election and makes the elect partakers of ordained salvation. However, they are by no means the motivating cause or foundation of election, which solely stems from God's free pleasure. This is evident as follows:

XXIV. 1. The Scriptures explicitly state that election has no other cause but God's good pleasure.

(a) 2 Timothy 1:9 says, "He saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began." The apostle speaks of individuals, "us," not qualities. He explains that God, the one who saves, gives eternal glory and brings them to it through calling. He reveals the source of that end and the means leading to it,

and he asserts that it is not works but solely God's purpose and grace.

(b) Romans 9:11, 12, 16 discusses children, not yet born or having done anything good or evil, to ensure that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls. This is meant to exclude works as moving causes for the election or rejection of anyone, emphasizing that God's purpose according to election, not works, is the sole origin. It is not from the one who wills or runs but from God's mercy.

(c) Luke 12:32 says, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Matthew 11:26 adds, "Yes, Father, for such was your gracious will." Ephesians 1:5 notes that God predestined us according to the purpose of his will. Romans 11:5, 6 speaks of a remnant chosen by grace, making it clear that if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise, grace would no longer be grace. These passages explicitly present God's good pleasure and free grace as the source of election to salvation, excluding all other factors, especially works.

Proof 2. Faith, etc., Arise from Election.

XXV. Faith, good works, and perseverance in both do not originate from humans but from God and flow from eternal election. Thus, election does not come from faith, good works, and perseverance. That these things do not come from humans themselves will be shown later (Chapter XXXI, XXXII). That election does not originate from faith, but faith arises from election, is evident: A. Romans 8:29, 30. "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son. And those whom he predestined, he also called, and those whom he called, he also justified, and those whom he justified, he also glorified." Here, the apostle presents

election to glory and grace, to the glory as the ultimate end, and to the blessings as the means leading to the ordained glory.

Objection.

Paul speaks of the cross and says that believers are predestined to suffer, just as Christ suffered, so that believers would be conformed to the image of the Son. They are called to endure this suffering, and God justifies it, meaning He approves of it, considers it good, and brings believers to glory in the eyes of humanity.

Answer.

(a) It is clear that the apostle speaks of individuals, pointing his finger at them, saying, "those," "those," "these," not speaking of qualities or kinds.

(b) Although the apostle previously mentioned suffering, in these verses, he does not speak of suffering but provides a solid foundation for comfort in suffering, namely, the eternal election of individuals to glory by making them conformed to Christ, calling them, and justifying them.

(c) The conformity of believers is not about suffering, for suffering also befalls the wicked who do not share conformity with Christ. It is about holiness. 1 Corinthians 15:49 says, "Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly one." Galatians 4:19 mentions becoming like Christ in form. 2 Corinthians 3:18 speaks of being transformed into the same image.

(d) The calling is not a calling to suffering but to faith, hope, and love, which is done through the Gospel and is for glory and virtue; see 2 Peter 1:3. "His divine power has granted to us all things that

pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence." 1 Peter 5:10 mentions being called to eternal glory. This calling originates from election, as the apostle says here: "Those whom he foreknew, he also predestined; those he predestined, he also called." Therefore, the called ones are called the elect and believers. Revelation 17:14 mentions those with Christ, the called, chosen, and faithful.

(e) It does not even appear that "justified" would imply God's approval of believers' suffering and patience before the world. To justify means to acquit from sins and penalties because of Christ's merits, as seen in Romans 8:33, 34, where it is God who justifies. "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies." Christ died for this purpose. Thus, justifying is not a display of God's approval of believers' suffering and patience in the eyes of the world.

(f) Similarly, "glorify" does not mean honoring believers before people but granting them eternal glory. When God is said to glorify someone, it does not mean elevating their reputation among humans. Believers' suffering often leads to contempt and ridicule in the world, not honor. To glorify means to make them partakers of eternal glory. See Romans 8:17, where being glorified is expressed as obtaining the crown of glory. "And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him."

From all of these, it can be seen that this evasion is in vain and powerless. Therefore, it remains firm from this text that conformity to Christ, calling, and justification flow from eternal election, and therefore, God was not moved by faith and good works in election, favoring one over the other.

XXVI. B. The same is also evident from the texts that specifically mention faith, good works, perseverance, and show that election does not come from them, but they flow from election. Concerning faith, see Acts 13:48. "And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed." Here, specific individuals are spoken of, said to believe. It is added why they believed and others did not; the source of their belief was that God had appointed them to eternal life. Though it does not explicitly state who appointed them, we know that no one can appoint anyone to eternal life but God alone (1 Thessalonians 5:9, "For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation..."). The end is eternal life, and some were appointed for this. Although it does not say "predestined beforehand" here, we know that ordination to eternal life occurred from eternity (Ephesians 1:4, 2 Timothy 1:9, Ephesians 3:11). It is not to suggest having a good qualification in oneself because this word never signifies an inner disposition of the soul. No one has any inner qualification for either faith or eternal life, as will be shown in its proper place. Rather, it means ordaining, appointing, assigning, and once dedicating oneself to something, expressed as arranging for service in 1 Corinthians 16:16. Because they were ordained to eternal life by God, it followed that God also gave them faith as a means to lead them to it. When it is said, "as many believed," it does not mean the apostle knew the exact number. It also does not imply that there were no more elect in those places who would later be converted. It simply means the word was fruitful and effective for faith in many, and only the elect believed.

The same is evident in Titus 1:1. "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness." This does not say that faith preceded election and was a motivating cause

of election; otherwise, it would be an election of faith. But because it is the faith of God's elect, it is clear that faith follows and proceeds from election.

C. That holiness flows from election is seen in Ephesians 1:4-5. "Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love, he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons." If holiness is the end for which God chose someone, it cannot be the motivating cause for one being chosen over another. "He chose us" does not mean "He chose us believers, foreseeing through His middle knowledge that we would believe," resulting in our being chosen, and from that faith, holiness would flow. Because faith is given to someone because they are chosen, as has been shown and is also evident from verse 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." All spiritual blessings flow from election, including faith, which is a special blessing and gift of God, as well as sanctification.

D. That perseverance flows from election is evident in Matthew 24:24. "For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect." False prophets would have great power of deception and lead many astray, but they could not possibly lead any true believers astray, and the reason for this is that they were chosen. Likewise, in Revelation 13:8, "and all who dwell on earth will worship it (the beast), everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain." Why did others not follow the beast? The contrast shows it was because their names were written in the book of life. This is also evident from the golden chain of salvation, from which not a single link can be broken: "For those whom he foreknew he also

predestined... And those whom he predestined he also called... justified... glorified" (Romans 8:29-30). The apostle Peter derives all blessings, including perseverance in holiness, from eternal election: "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood..." (1 Peter 1:1-2).

Objection 1.

XXVII. Romans 8:29, "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined." Here, it is explicitly stated that there is foreknowledge before preordination. Therefore, God sees their faith, good works, and perseverance beforehand, before choosing them, and is thereby moved to choose them over others.

Answer.

It is far from what the apostle says that God foresees the faith and good works of some and has therefore chosen them. The apostle speaks of persons, not qualities. This foreknowledge is the eternal election unto salvation; it is to know some as His own (2 Timothy 2:19, "The Lord knows those who are his"). It signifies the election of Christ as Mediator (1 Peter 1:20, "He was foreknown before the foundation of the world") and also the election of certain individuals (1 Peter 1:2, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father"). God did not choose blindly who would become godly and believing, but He chose with knowledge certain individuals as His own. The reason foreknowledge precedes preordination here is that the apostle places foreknowledge as the source of everything and then moves on to the means by which He brings those foreknown to salvation: "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined...to be

conformed to the image of his Son, and those whom he predestined he also called..." and so on.

Objection 2.

God has loved the elect from eternity; therefore, He foresaw their faith because without faith, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6).

Answer.

God commands us to love our enemies, bless those who curse us, and do good to those who hate us (Matthew 5:44). However, in them, as enemies, there is no loveliness that would move us to love them. Similarly, God, out of love, loves His enemies and gives them His Son (John 3:16, Romans 5:8). But God demonstrates His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. God's love originates from Himself, and He chooses objects to love, entirely independent of humans (1 John 4:10, 19, "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. We love because he first loved us"). It is known that one can love in two ways: with a love of affection and benevolence, such as loving one's enemies, or with a love of delight. God has loved the elect with a love of benevolence from eternity and, in time, He loves them with a love of delight, taking pleasure in their holy deeds. Thus, it is impossible to please God without faith. They please God in time, those whom God was pleased to choose from eternity.

Objection 3.

God has chosen the saints, the poor of this world, the rich in faith (Colossians 3:12, "God's chosen ones, holy and beloved"; 2

Thessalonians 2:13, "God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth"; 1 Peter 1:2, "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit"; James 2:5, "God chose the poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom").

Answer.

In these passages, holiness and faith are not presented as moving causes for which God chose them but as fruits of election and as evidence that someone, now in time, is chosen by God from eternity. Colossians 3:12 does not establish a connection in God's eternal purpose, much less that holiness precedes election as its cause. The apostle speaks of the elect as they are in time, already partaking of sanctification. He uses election before time, sanctification in time, and God's love for them as the motivation to encourage them to live worthy of these blessings. 2 Thessalonians 2:13 and 1 Peter 1:2 speak of holiness not as preceding election and being the cause of it, as if it said, "God chose you, taking your holiness into account." Rather, God chose them for salvation and holiness as the means by which they are brought to salvation. James 2:5, the apostle speaks of the state of some believers as it was in time: poor in the world. He admonishes that they not be despised because God also chose them to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.

As the election has occurred according to God's free pleasure, so has rejection. See paragraph 14.

XXVIII. Question V: Whether the decision of eternal election is changeable or unchangeable?

The Remonstrants find themselves in a dilemma here, being overwhelmed by clear Scripture passages that cannot be

contradicted. Yet, they must argue for changeability because they make election dependent on the changeable free will of humans. So, they have invented a distinction between a perfect and an imperfect decision of election. The imperfect decision, according to them, is God's will to save the believers and the godly, which depends on the free will of humans who can make them believe and fall from faith. The perfect decision of election, in their view, is God's will to save specific individuals because God foresees that they will believe and persevere in faith. They consider the first as changeable and the second as unchangeable, not by the power of election itself but because of the steadfastness of human beings, which God foresees with certainty. We reject this distinction as being outside of and contrary to God's Word and contrary to the matter itself. We maintain that the decision of eternal election is entirely unchangeable, and it is so by the power of election itself, through which God has firmly decreed both the end and the means to the end, to effect both irresistibly. This is evident:

Proof 1. All decrees are unchangeable.

XXIX. From all the passages testifying that all God's decrees are unchangeable, as has been extensively discussed in the previous chapter. Malachi 3:6, "For I the LORD do not change." James 1:17, "With whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." Isaiah 14:27, "The LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it?" Isaiah 46:10, "My counsel shall stand." Add to these passages those that speak of election, such as Romans 9:11, "in order that God's purpose of election might continue." Hebrews 6:17, "So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose." 2 Timothy 2:19, "But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are his.'"

It cannot be disputed that this last passage speaks of eternal election, for the apostle had spoken of the apostasy of Hymenaeus and Philetus and then declared that those who are God's will not fall away. Not that the foundation of steadfastness is in man but that they are called and brought to faith on a solid foundation, specifically, a firm foundation laid by God Himself, namely, His eternal counsel and election of His own, which He knows individually and keeps by His power from falling away, both from eternity and in time. On this basis, he gives the reason for the apostasy of those two, so that it should not seem strange to anyone, causing offense because in the Church there are all kinds of people, both good and evil, some prepared for glory and others for destruction. Just as in a large house, there are vessels of all sorts, some of silver and some of wood and clay, some for honorable use and some for dishonorable. Therefore, everyone must take care to remain steadfast in truth and godliness because those known by God will certainly turn away from unrighteousness. Those whom God chooses for salvation, He also chooses for holiness. Sanctification is evidence that God has chosen them, and these will also remain steadfast in truth and godliness, for the gifts of grace and the calling of God are irrevocable (Romans 11:29).

Proof 2. Election and salvation are bound together.

Scripture binds election and salvation together with an unbreakable bond. Neither the unchanging God, nor cunning, nor the wicked world, nor its powerful corruption will break this bond. Those whom God has chosen for salvation will certainly obtain it. Consider Romans 8:29-30, "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, and those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified." He speaks of

glorification in the past tense because of its certainty, as if it had already happened. Also, see Romans 11:7, "The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened." In Greek, it says, "Election obtained it." This removes all consideration of qualities, leaving only the work of God in our thoughts. According to the apostle, election precedes obtaining; God who does one thing also does the other.

Proof 3. It is impossible to change.

The steadfastness of the elect, due to God's unchangeable decree, is confirmed by the Lord Jesus. Matthew 24:24, "For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect." It is then impossible for the elect to be led astray. The term "elect" means those whom God has chosen from eternity to be His own and set apart for Him. False prophets would also target them and do their utmost to deceive them, but it would not succeed. When it says "if possible," it does not refer to the possibility of the false prophets and their work but to the steadfastness of the state of the elect due to God's decree. They could not be deceived because they were the elect; therefore, the work of false prophets would be in vain.

Objection 1. XXX. Believers are continually urged to fear and diligence in making their calling and election sure. 1 Corinthians 10:12, "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall." This means falling away from God, as many Israelites did. Philippians 2:12, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Hebrews 4:1, "Let us therefore fear, lest, while a promise remains of entering his rest, any of you should seem to have come short of it." 2 Peter 1:10, "Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election." 2 Peter 3:17, "You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are

not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability."

Answer.

(a) These passages do not speak of fear of damnation but of a careful watch over our conduct.

(b) The exhortations are means to lead believers on the right path to ordained salvation because election is for glory and grace, and for the end and the means leading to that end.

(c) Calling and election are made sure by us on our side, that is, assured that we partake in the heavenly calling and that we are chosen by God. But it is not made sure by us on God's side because that was already established in God's unchangeable counsel from eternity.

Objection 2.

The threats of perishing indicate that election is not unchangeable. See Luke 13:3, "No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Revelation 12:9, "And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him."

Answer.

(a) Threats, like exhortations, are means of awakening to shun sins and practice godliness. If someone does not repent, they will certainly perish. Therefore, this threat applies to all unrepentant individuals. If someone is converted and is not assured of it, they will regard the threat in accordance with their state. If someone is

converted and is conscious of it, they have further progress to make. If they become sluggish or slack, they must stir themselves up, fearing chastisement of body or soul. All believers must diligently guard themselves against everything that would bring God's wrath upon the disobedient, and heed all threats in a way that makes them flee from the sins against which the threat is directed.

(b) "Removing his share from the book of life" means that he will not be saved; he will have no part in life, nor in all those whose names are written in the book of life. However, it does not imply that they had a share in salvation and were written in the book of life and were then erased, as no one, even among the objectors, would claim. Therefore, they must be convinced that this passage does not support the idea of the mutability of election.

Objection 3.

Those given by God to Christ can still be lost, so the decision of election is not unchangeable. See John 17:12, "While I was with them, I kept them in your name. Those whom you gave me I have kept, and none of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." And Paul testifies that his state was uncertain because he could be disqualified, 1 Corinthians 9:27, "But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified."

Answer. John 17:12. Here there is no connection between Judas and the others given by God to Christ and kept. Instead, there is a contrast. Judas is not said to have been given to Christ, but it is only mentioned that while others were not lost, Judas was already lost. Therefore, this can be understood as "except," as the Greek word "ei mee" is often translated. See Matthew 12:4, Galatians 1:7. Judas was

never given to Christ because, although a chosen apostle, he was a devil. John 6:70.

For other objections, refer to the treatise on the perseverance of the saints, Part 2, Chapter 57. The slander that a chosen one, even if they live as wickedly as possible, will still be saved, is answered in paragraph 6.

XXXI. Question VI: Can believers be assured of their election?

The Roman Catholics and Remonstrants, because they place election under a condition dependent on the changeable free will of humans, do not know if they will persevere to the end, and therefore, they cannot be sure of their election. We, on the other hand, do not say that all believers are immediately assured, nor that assurance is always at the same level of sensitivity, nor that a believer is assured in a state of abandonment. However, God has provided such marks of election in Scripture that a believer, recognizing them through the work of the Holy Spirit, can conclude that they are chosen and rejoice in that assurance. Believers can indeed be assured of their election, and they should strive for that assurance. This is also evident from the fruits of election: calling, faith, sanctification. Someone can be assured that they partake in these, and thus they can ascend to the statement: "Those whom He justified, He also called; those whom He called, He also justified; those whom He justified, He also glorified." That someone can be assured of their calling is evident from 1 Corinthians 1:26, "For consider your calling, brothers." Hebrews 3:1 also affirms this, "Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling." Regarding faith, see 2 Timothy 1:12, "I know whom I have believed." This is also evident from the ultimate purpose for which believers have received the Holy Spirit, as stated in 1 Corinthians 2:12, "Now we have received not the spirit of

the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God." Furthermore, the Scripture expressly states that believers are assured. Romans 8:16 says, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." For a detailed discussion of assurance, see Chapter 34 on justification.

Struggles concerning election.

XXXII. Besides the fact that many stumble over this divine truth, some reject it, others slander it, and a third disregard it, there are sometimes struggles in the children of God concerning whether they are chosen. Some are suddenly seized by a cold fear with the thought: "You are not called." Others come to this struggle more slowly, thinking, "If I am not chosen, I will still be lost, and I fear that in the end, I will find out that I am not one of the elect." Sometimes these struggles come from the devil, who inserts these thoughts groundlessly and repeatedly, saying: "You are not chosen, God hates you, God has rejected you, you will not be saved despite all your praying and laboring; leave it be." These insertions torment and wound the soul, putting it in a distressing condition, rendering it unable to believe as vividly, pray as fervently, rest as sweetly, rejoice in God as simply, and cleave to and serve Him as sincerely as it did before. Sometimes these struggles arise from the person's own heart. I do not consider it a struggle when someone, not yet having certainty about their state, is troubled and seeks grounds for assurance so they can ascend to the source of election. It is a contest against one's own evil and unbelieving heart when someone, driven by an irrational inclination, as if they wanted it that way, or as if they wanted to force God into assuring them of their election, engages in contradiction. From this, murmuring and resentful thoughts against God often arise. Even the disconcerting thoughts of not being chosen

can emerge from a better condition of the soul than the previous one. One perceives the darkness of the soul, unbelief, the power of corruption, and the unanswered prayers. They have been eager to be thoroughly and undeniably assured of their state and thus their election. They have prayed earnestly for it but have never reached that point. Out of this, fleeting thoughts arise: "Am I truly chosen? Am I one of the reprobate?" Then they become settled thoughts, and all the reasons for not being chosen become clearer and stronger, further unsettling the soul. In the end, they decide that they are not chosen. From this point on, they almost forsake all means: prayer, reading, hearing, laboring to receive Christ; it does not go as before. They are constantly hindered by the thought that they are not chosen, that it is in vain, that everything is futile. This leads to despair, distress, a tendency to accuse God, and other disturbances. A sorrowful state indeed!

Counsel against it.

XXVIII. What advice can be given? Who can heal the wounds of the soul other than the Physician Himself? He works through means; therefore, listen to my advice and let me gently instruct you.

Consider the Unprofitability

1. Have these restless thoughts ever given you peace and tranquility? Are you better off now than before? Are you wiser and more understanding now? Are you holier? Do you have more peace now? If not, but rather if you are worse off and more troubled than before, why do you want to torment yourself? Cast them all away at once. But you may say, "I cannot get rid of them; they have a hold on me." Do you not now see that you have been too reckless in the beginning, and you have indulged these temptations too much? It is time to stop and fight against all these whims and thoughts on this matter.

Distract yourself repeatedly with different thoughts and tasks so that you distance yourself from these temptations.

Foolishness.

2. Consider the foolishness of it; for you are obsessing over matters that God has kept hidden in His own counsel, unrevealed to humanity. Even if you currently have no evidence that you are chosen, you cannot conclude from this that you are not chosen, for you have no basis for knowing that you will never repent. You might say, "I feel in my heart that I am not chosen but rejected, and I will never be converted." I respond that this is untrue, mere imagination. No one can know that they are a reprobate. God has not revealed this in His Word, and the Lord does not have such intimate communion with the ungodly that He would exceptionally disclose it to them. You may further argue that some did indeed know that they were reprobate, like Spira and others. I reply that they did not know; these were mere imaginations. I do not mean to say that their imaginations could not possibly be true, that they were not among the elect; that may well be the case. What I am saying is that they did not know this, neither from the Bible nor from direct revelations; it was just their own imagining. For it has happened that some who were just as convinced as others that they were reprobate later repented, or having been converted before, gained much assurance of their election. You might then say, "But surely those who have committed the sin against the Holy Spirit know that they are reprobate." I reply, yes, those who have committed the sin against the Holy Spirit are indeed reprobate; that is true. However, they do not repent after committing those sins but persist in their wickedness and continue to rage unfeelingly. Since you neither know it nor can know it, and it is certainly just imaginations, why would you be so foolish as to torment yourself with unfounded fantasies? You may say, "I know

that I am unconverted, and I have been enlightened once, but I have become hardened under so many means. Can I not then conclude my rejection from this?" I answer: Even if you are currently unconverted, if you have resisted previous enlightenments and hardened your heart against the Word, you still cannot conclude your rejection. You can still be converted. Moreover, perhaps you do not fully understand your own state or the grace the Lord has bestowed upon you. There is one grace in having received life and another grace in knowing the things given to us by God. So, no matter how you perceive yourself, you cannot know that you are rejected. Therefore, abandon this folly; reject it as foolishness.

To Adhere to the Revealed Will.

3. Cling to the revealed will of God. God, through the Gospel, offers His Son, Jesus Christ. He invites all who are willing to come to Him. He promises that all who believe in the Son will have eternal life; He promises that He will never cast out anyone who comes to Him. God condemns no one except for their sins. God does not prevent anyone from repenting, believing in Christ, and being saved. God is not the cause of anyone's damnation. It is each person's own fault and their own free will if they live wickedly, and then it is just for God to punish and condemn them for their sins. Hold fast to the Word and abandon those lofty imaginations. Seek Christ, believe in Him, pray, and fight against sin, believing that you will be saved if you do so according to God's Word. This is the firm and secure path.

But you may say: faith and repentance are the work of God; He grants it only to His elect, and if I am reprobate, He will not grant it to me. I answer:

1. Nonetheless, it is certain that it is your fault if you do not believe and do not repent. If you do not do it, then accuse yourself and

not God, for He is not obliged to grant it to anyone; and even if He grants it to some, He is not obligated to do so for others.

2. If God has not granted it to you until this day, you still do not know whether He will not do so in the future. Therefore, do not be resentful or angry with the Lord and His holy decree. Humble yourself, start anew, and adhere to the Word; under the Lord's blessing, you will overcome these temptations and continue more steadfastly and vividly on the path of salvation. This concludes the discussion of this temptation.

Tasting the Election.

XXXIV. While one cannot be assured of their rejection, they can indeed be assured of their election, as we have shown earlier. Therefore, it is the duty of every Christian to seek assurance, as urged by the apostle in 2 Peter 1:10. This assurance is the wellspring of much joy in God and substantial growth in sanctification. To attain this assurance, one should not attempt to ascend to heaven and inspect the book of life from the front to find their name, as in Romans 10:6, 7. True assurance is not achieved through mere imaginings, where one holds themselves entirely certain due to the persistence of their imagination, even though they lack the slightest grounds for assurance. Instead, assurance comes through the Word, where one can find a clear description of those who are chosen. If someone recognizes these qualities within themselves, they can conclude that they are elected.

Calling.

1. The first sign is calling. God inwardly and effectually calls only those He has chosen. This is a solid truth, as in Romans 8:30, "Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called." Jeremiah 31:3 also declares, "Yes, I have loved you with an

everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you." So, if you bring yourself before the omniscience of the Lord, truly examine yourself, and become aware of an enlightened understanding to recognize the spiritual blessings of the covenant in their spiritual nature. If you find love and longing within you for spiritual aspects of the soul, such as love and fear of God, willingness and obedience, freedom of the soul, and joy in the Lord. If you experience a constant and uplifting force to think of God, to pray, to recover from deviations, and to walk pleasingly before God. If you sense that being close to the Lord is your life, and being away from Him is painful. If these things are within you, you can be assured of your calling and drawing. Since this arises from election, you can deduce: "I have been inwardly, effectually drawn by the Lord to Him and His communion, therefore, I am also chosen." Blessed is the one who deals with this truth in all sincerity, neither denying what they have received nor boasting of things they do not possess.

Faith.

2. Faith is another sure sign of election. This is taught in the Word of God, as in Acts 13:48, "And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." And Titus 1:1 speaks of "the faith of God's elect." So, if you are assured that you take pleasure in God's plan through Jesus Christ, the Lord, the Mediator for reconciling and saving sinners; that you turn to this Mediator out of grief and sorrow for your sinful heart and deeds, out of fear of God's wrath, out of love for communion with God and a spiritual life, out of a sense of your inability to attain these things on your own; if you turn to this Mediator, look to Him, long for Him, engage in negotiation with Him, accept His offer, surrender yourself to Him, place the weight of your salvation on Him, and

rely on Him, whether it is with strength or weakness, clarity or obscurity, with more or less struggle, more or less continuously; if these things are within you, then you possess true faith. Be assured of your faith, and from that state, you can deduce your eternal election.

Sanctification.

3. Sanctification is another definite sign of election. Ephesians 1:4 says, "just as He chose us...that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." If you find within yourself a hatred, aversion, and sorrow over hidden sins of the heart as well as deeds, an internal desire and love for godly qualities of the heart and the pursuit of all virtues in the fear, love, and obedience of God, if you detect a struggle within you between the flesh and the spirit so that sin does not reign, and does not carry out everything according to its evil desire, but instead encounters internal resistance in your will, hindered by the fear of God, and is often driven away; if you find yourself praying, wrestling for peace of conscience, seeking closeness to the Lord; if you pay attention to your heart, thoughts, words, and actions, whether in solitude or among people, to govern them according to God's will; if, I say, these things are within you, then you possess spiritual life and the beginning of sanctification. This has not arisen from your nature; it is a gift of God. This gift flows from election. You can, therefore, deduce your election from this condition.

How to Draw the Conclusion.

XXXV. Having drawn this conclusion, contemplate that this election is the primary source from which your life, godliness, and salvation flow. You would not have come into the world if it were not for this

decision. And now that you are here, how sinful and wretched are you in yourself? What goodness God has shown you, for while He leaves countless others to perish due to their sins, He has chosen you from eternity to be His child and the object of His incomprehensible grace and salvation! Why is the Gospel preached to you? Why are you called, drawn, and made alive? Where does this come from if not from the eternal purpose to save you?

Lose yourself in holy wonderment over this and say with Hagar, "Have I also here seen Him who sees me?" (Genesis 16:13) And with the Psalmist, "What is man that You are mindful of him?" (Psalm 8:5). If there are any emotions of joy within you, rejoice that your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Having engaged in this contemplation for some time, descend to every grace you receive, as they flow from this source, and go further to eternal salvation, anchoring it to eternal election, as Paul does in Romans 8:29, 30. Then, consider the unchangeability of this decision, how certain, firm, and unalterable your state and salvation are. Be still in this and say confidently, "You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalm 73:24).

The Fountain of Comfort in Sad Trials.

XXXVI. Here is the fountain of comfort against all the sad adversities that the Lord sends your way in this life. For all these things are by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23). He will accomplish what is appointed for me (Job 23:14). All these adversities come out of love, for your ultimate good. We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). He who has loved you from eternity, appointed you as His child and heir to bestow all His goodness upon you, would He allow anything harmful

to befall you? No, far from it. He chastises those He loves (Revelation 3:19). Therefore, take up your cross with contentment, bear it patiently, and find solace in the good end, even if you do not see it yet.

Against Sins.

Here is comfort against sins. They burden a child of God and often rob them of all their delight and life. What unpleasant thoughts they produce in the elect! But consider this: He who chose you out of free goodness and love, without being moved by your good works or faith to make such a decision, and who never changes in His goodness and love, He who determined this while you were still under the dominion of sin so that He might be merciful to you (Romans 11:33), He who will certainly glorify the one He has chosen for salvation—will He reject you because of your remaining sins over which you grieve? Therefore, stand in faith, do not succumb to the multitude of remaining enemies, look to this eternal decree, and to the perfect satisfaction of the Lord Jesus Christ, to that covenant of grace, rest in it, and let your sins make you sorrowful but not disheartened.

A Source of Support in Prayer.

XXXVII. The assurance of one's election also provides great confidence and strong support in prayer. When approaching God, one can say, "My Father! You have known me by name; I have found grace in Your eyes; You have known me from eternity as Yours, chosen by You to be Your child, an object of Your love, destined to be wondrous and glorified in Your grace, mercy, and faithfulness, revealed in the path You have led me and will continue to lead me on. So now, Father, behold, I fear these adversities, these hardships weigh me down, this sin torments me, I desire this and that, I need it

for my body, I long for it in my soul. Please, look upon Your chosen one, Your favored one, hear me, and grant me my request."

What confidence, intimacy, faith in being heard, and quiet submission this gives!

A Means to Holiness.

XXXVIII. The assurance of election is a great means to holiness. Let no natural person misunderstand this, be offended by it, or imagine that such grounds would lead to carelessness. Scripture teaches otherwise, namely, that everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure (1 John 3:3). The godly experience this daily: the more assured they become of God's love for them, the more they are stirred to love God. We love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). Knowing that sanctification is not the cause of his election and salvation but a fruit of election and a principle of salvation, he works purely out of love. Loving God, it kindles in him an affection for conformity to His will and for actions that might please his Lord.

And for the Glory of God.

XXXIX. Finally, when a godly person sees that the beginning, middle, end, and everything, without any contribution on his part or any reason on his side, comes solely from God according to eternal election, this will revive the soul to return everything to God, to give Him the honor and glory for everything, and to thank Him wholeheartedly, just as the apostle did for others in this regard (2 Thessalonians 2:13). "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth."

Here, the attentive soul will encounter God's freedom, goodness, mercy, wisdom, power, and unchangeableness. It will be deeply immersed in contemplating these divine perfections in their full glory. It will lose itself in wonder and sink sweetly into adoration. Rising up again, it will rest and rejoice that God's glory is so far beyond its comprehension and will exclaim, "For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever! Amen."

Chapter 7

Of the Covenant of Redemption between God the Father and God the Son concerning the chosen ones; or of the Council of Peace.

Having contemplated the decrees of God in general and the preordination of man to his eternal end in particular, we turn to the contemplation of the covenant of redemption. The first Reformers and some subsequent writers have spoken of this sacred mystery with great reverence, and some at length; I wish that the same reverence would be displayed now when speaking and hearing of it. Do not regard it as a truth that has only recently become known, as some pretend out of ignorance of what has been previously written, but as an ancient truth known in the Church from of old. Let everyone strive to understand it well and to use it rightly. We shall present it in its entirety, even as it is now executed by Christ. Note the following:

1. The Parties to this covenant.

2. The individuals over whom, and for whose benefit, this covenant was made.
3. The existence of such a covenant transaction.
4. The work of one Party, the Father. In this regard, consider:
 - (a) The commandments and conditions of this covenant.
 - (b) The promises upon the fulfillment of the conditions.
 - (c) The confirmation of the promises by oath and sacraments.
5. The work of the other Party, the Lord Jesus Christ. In this regard, consider:
 - (a) The acceptance of the conditions and promises.
 - (b) The fulfillment of the conditions.
 - (c) The demand for the confirmed promises.

1. Is between God the Father and God the Son.

II. First and foremost, let us consider the covenanting parties, which are God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This matter becomes easier to understand when viewed more in its execution rather than just its decree, for as the Lord carries it out in time, so He had decreed it from eternity. Nevertheless, we discuss it as one of the inner workings of God, as it often appears to us in the Holy Scriptures. Christ is said to have been foreknown before the foundation of the world, as mentioned in 1 Peter 1:20. The chosen ones are chosen in Him, as Ephesians 1:4 states. Grace was given to

them in Christ Jesus before the ages began, as 2 Timothy 1:9 proclaims. Everything that Christ encountered in the world happened to Him according to the eternal decree, foreknowledge, and determined counsel of God, as seen in Psalm 2:7, Luke 22:22, and Acts 2:23.

How a covenant can be made between Them. III. According to this eternal Covenant, the Son has had a role and oversight concerning redemption from eternity, and He demonstrated this role immediately after the Fall, even before His incarnation, in His guidance of His Church in the OLD TESTAMENT. Here arises a question: Since the Father and the Son are one in Essence, and thus one in will and harmony, how can a covenant be made between Them, given that mutual wills are required for a covenant? Does this not separate the Persons too much?

I answer: Because the Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Father with regard to personality, one will can be considered as twofold – as the will to redeem through the second Person as the Redeemer, which is the will on the side of the Father, and as the will to redeem through Himself as the Redeemer, which is then the will on the side of the Son.

2. Is about the chosen ones. IV. The individuals over whom, or for whose benefit, this covenant was made are those who are chosen in Christ, of whom we spoke at length in the previous chapter. They are said to belong to the Father and to have been given to Christ by Him, as stated in John 17:6: "They were Yours, and You gave them to Me." Therefore, they are said to be written in the Lamb's book, as Revelation 21:27 affirms: "Those who are written in the Lamb's book of life."

The Lord would allow them to sin by their own free will, and thus they would be ensnared by sin, making them by nature children of wrath. In order for the infinite mercy and grace of God to be shown to them, to lift them from this state, and to bring them to salvation, a Redeemer was necessary to satisfy God's justice. The Father then gives them to the Son as the Redeemer, and the Son accepts them, inscribes their names in His book, represents them all without exception, for no one else, and promises to fulfill the Father's pleasure by bringing them to salvation.

3. That such a covenant exists is evident: V. That there is indeed such a covenant between Jehovah and the Lord Jesus for the chosen ones is evident from the following:

4. Psalm 89:29, 35. "I will keep My steadfast love for him forever, and My covenant will stand firm for him. I will not violate My covenant." It is clear that this speaks of the covenant between God the Father and the Lord Jesus because it is known that the Psalms often speak of the Lord Jesus, and David is a significant type of Him, even being called David, as seen in Hosea 3:5. In this Psalm, both David and the Lord Jesus are spoken of, with David foreshadowing the Lord Jesus. I emphasize the Lord Jesus because:

(a) Everything spoken up to verse 39 fits remarkably well with the Lord Jesus and is ascribed to Him in other places, such as being God's Chosen One (vs. 4), the Holy One of God (vs. 20), and the Mighty One (vs. 20), among others.

(b) Not everything fits David, especially being the firstborn Son of God (vs. 28), the King of kings (vs. 28), and having an everlasting kingdom (vs. 37).

(c) The latter part of the Psalm, beginning with verse 39, presents a contrast between the kingdom of Christ (vs. 26-37) and the kingdom of David, which would be destroyed, as mentioned in verse 39.

(d) The same events recounted in 2 Samuel 7:12-16 are mentioned in this Psalm (vs. 27-38). Therefore, it is beyond doubt that they refer to the same account. Now, the words in 2 Samuel 7 are explicitly referred to Christ in the NEW TESTAMENT, as seen in Acts 13:22 and Hebrews 1:5. Consequently, the events in this Psalm (vs. 27-38) also pertain to Christ. When you consider all this together, it becomes clear that this passage speaks of the Messiah, Christ. This Messiah is said to be in covenant with the Lord, indicating that there is indeed a covenant between the Lord and Christ.

VI.

2. This same is also evident from Zechariah 6:12, 13: "Thus says the LORD of hosts, saying: 'Behold, a Man whose name is the BRANCH, He shall branch out from His place, and He shall build the temple of the Lord. Yes, He shall build the temple of the Lord. He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne. So, He shall be a Priest on His throne, and the COUNCIL OF PEACE shall be between them both.'" By "them both," we cannot understand Jews and Gentiles, for they are indeed united in one church in the NEW TESTAMENT, but there is no mention of them here; therefore, it cannot suddenly refer to them. The word "both" indicates that it speaks of two who were mentioned earlier, and no one was mentioned other than Jehovah and the Branch.

Nor can "them both" refer to two offices of the Lord Jesus, namely, the Royal and the Priestly. It is true that these offices could not be in one person: a king could not be a priest, and a priest could not be a king; these tribes and their offices had to remain distinct. However, in the Lord Jesus, they come together in one person. It is also true that these two offices come together in the execution of the Mediatorial office, but that does not mean that it is speaking of these two offices here. This cannot be the case because:

(a) Christ is one, and here it speaks of two.

(b) Also, it does not mention these two offices but being a Priest and ruling.

(c) Christ had three offices that all contributed to building the temple of the Lord, so there would need to be a reference to those three if it were speaking of the offices here.

(d) Consultation does not take place between offices; it is the work of individuals, and it occurred better between the three offices in the OLD TESTAMENT. Therefore, it does not refer to the Royal and Priestly offices.

Instead, "them both" refers to Jehovah and the Branch, who is the Messiah. With a single glance, one can see that it speaks of these two. Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Build the temple of the Lord." A Man whose name is the BRANCH, He shall build the temple of the Lord, which is the work of the Messiah. Building the temple of the Lord, that is, His church, would require Him to possess the necessary qualifications, namely, ruling and being a priest. Therefore, being a ruler and a priest is a description of the Branch, the one who would accomplish this work, and it is presented as a side note. He, the Branch, would be engaged in the work of the Lord entrusted to Him.

He would build the temple of the Lord. For this purpose, mutual understanding and consent were necessary, and there was also the need for deliberation, counsel, and wisdom. Thus, they were not only in agreement on working for the promotion of the peace of the chosen ones but also in the manner of execution, which the Prince of Peace, the Branch, would undertake, possessing the necessary qualities for the task.

VII.

3. Luke 22:29 serves this purpose as well: "I appoint to you a kingdom, just as My Father appointed to Me." Here, it doesn't say "horizoo" or "diatattoo," but "diatithemai," a word that means promising something in the manner of a testament or covenant. From this comes the word "diatheekee," testament or covenant. So, appointing implies a covenant, and by the power of this covenant, He would have the kingdom, as explicitly stated in Galatians 3:16, 17. Now, the promises were spoken to Abraham and his seed. He does not say: "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one: "And to your Seed," who is Christ. And this I say: the covenant that was confirmed before by God on Christ, etc. There you have a covenant, there you have promises, and there you have that they were made to Christ, and that the covenant was confirmed on Christ. Thus, there is a covenant between God and Christ.

VIII.

4. This is also evident from the words that imply a covenant, such as "My God" and "My Servant." That was the promise of the covenant. Jeremiah 31:33: "I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Isaiah 45:13, 14: "My servants." By the power of that covenant, the covenanting parties call God their God.

Deuteronomy 26:17, 18 uses the same manner of speaking. The Lord Jesus also commonly uses this: "My God, My Father." See, among others, John 20:17: "I ascend to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God."

IX.

5. This covenant is also clear from the fact that Christ is called a Surety, both in the OLD TESTAMENT and the New. Just see Hebrews 7:22: "By so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant." No one can be a surety unless there is a contract and covenant between the creditor and the debtor's surety. The creditor must agree and consent to accept a particular surety, and the surety must bind himself to the creditor for payment. Therefore, since the Lord Jesus, with mutual agreement and consent, became a Surety, there is a covenant between Jehovah and Christ.

X.

6. It is also evident from this logical reasoning: Where required conditions and commandments, where promises and sacraments exist on one side, where consent and acceptance of conditions and promises, where the fulfillment of conditions, where the demand for the promised things on the fulfilled conditions exist on the other side, there is, without a doubt, a covenant. Now, all of this exists between God and the Lord Jesus Christ; therefore, there is indeed a covenant between them.

We will now present this not only as evidence of the matter but also as a description of the nature of the covenant. In doing so, we will first show the work of one Party and then that of the other Party.

The Father sets conditions.

XI. In considering the work of the Father separately:

(a) The commandments as conditions.

(b) The promises.

(c) The assurances. The Father, choosing the Lord Jesus as the Redeemer, Mediator, and Savior, presents the chosen ones to Him and hands them over to Him to acquire and accomplish their salvation, as we have seen above. For this purpose, He sets before Him certain conditions and gives Him commandments to fulfill. This can be seen in John 12:49, 50: "For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life." John 10:18: "This command I have received from My Father."

Among these commandments, which are the conditions, are, among others:

1. That the Son would assume the nature of sinful humanity without sin. Hebrews 10:5: "You have prepared a body for Me."
2. That He, being Immanuel Yeanyrwrov, God and Man, having now the same nature as the sinners but among the chosen ones, would stand in their place, take their sins away from them, and take them upon Himself as if He had committed them Himself. For this purpose, He, being a Divine Person and thus above the law, would place Himself under the law, as it demanded punishment for transgressors and perfect obedience to obtain eternal life. This can be seen in Galatians 4:4: "...God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that..."

3. That He would have to bear all the punishments that their sins deserved, suffer, die for them, and rise from the dead. See John 10:18: "No one takes it (life) from Me, ... I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father." Acts 2:23: "Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death."
4. That in their place, He would have to fulfill all righteousness to make them righteous. Romans 5:19: "...so by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous." 2 Corinthians 5:19, 21: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself... For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."
5. That He would have to make the chosen ones partakers of the acquired salvation by preaching the Gospel to them, regenerating them, giving them faith, preserving them, raising them from the dead, and leading them into heaven. Thus, the execution of this great work would rest upon His shoulders. John 6:39: "This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day."

These are some general conditions presented. And there are promises added to them.

XII. Along with these conditions, the Father adds glorious promises, both concerning the Redeemer and the chosen ones, namely:

1. That God's pleasure would then be carried out happily through Him: Isaiah 53:10: "When His soul has made an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand."

2. That He would be King over all the chosen ones, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles: Psalm 2:6, 8: "Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession." Psalm 72:8, 11: "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him."
3. That He would have power over all creatures to govern them for the benefit of His chosen ones: Matthew 28:18: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." 1 Corinthians 15:27: "For 'He has put all things under His feet.'"
4. That He would receive a very high and wondrous glory that would be seen and acknowledged by all creatures: Hebrews 1:3: "When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." Revelation 3:21: "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."
5. That He would be the judge of heaven and earth: John 5:27: "And has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man." Acts 17:31: "Because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained."
6. Concerning the chosen ones, the Father promises Him that they would receive through Him all the blessings of the covenant of grace, namely, forgiveness of sins, reconciliation, adoption as children, peace, sanctification, and eternal glory: Luke 12:32: "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Romans 8:32: "He who did not spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

XIII. God confirms all these promises to the Son, both through sacraments and extraordinary revelations.

(a) God swears to Him with an oath. Psalm 110:4: "The Lord has sworn and will not relent, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.'" Psalm 89:36: "I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David (Christ)."

(b) God accompanies it with sacraments, both of the Old and New Testaments, which we will discuss shortly.

(c) God assures Him through extraordinary and immediate revelations and testimonies. Matthew 3:17: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Likewise, Matthew 17:5: God was pleased not only with the Person but also with the role as Redeemer and Mediator and with the work of His redemption.

XIV. This is the work of one party, namely the Father; now we shall consider the work of the other party, namely the Lord Jesus Christ, which consists in the following:

1. That He accepts both the conditions and the promises.
2. That He fulfills the conditions.
3. That, on the completed conditions, He demands the promises.

The Son accepts the conditions.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ, being true God and holy man, upon hearing these conditions according to His human nature, neither could nor would reject them due to His perfect holiness and God's love. Instead, He accepted them with joy and readiness, as evident from Psalm 40:7-9: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering

You did not require. Then I said, 'Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of Me. I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within My heart.'" This passage is also quoted by the apostle in Hebrews 10:5-7 and applied more broadly to Christ.

XV. He also accepts the promises, which is evident from the fact that He is strengthened by God with promises, oaths, and seals during the execution of His work. Isaiah 50:8: "He is near who justifies Me; who will contend with Me?" He is said to be justified in the Spirit, 1 Timothy 3:16. How was Christ justified? He was strengthened and assured by God that His suffering and death were the perfect ransom for all the sins of the chosen ones, that the Father was completely satisfied with the execution of the suretyship, and that He obtained complete salvation for all the chosen ones. Thus, He, who appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh in His earthly walk (Romans 8:3) and had all the sins of the chosen ones on His account, will be seen again without sin (Hebrews 9:28). It is also evident that Christ strengthened Himself with the promises by looking at the promised glory during His suffering (Hebrews 12:2): "who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross."

XVI. Now the question arises: How did the Lord Christ use the Sacraments? Because they were for believers and sealed them regarding their part in the covenant through His suffering and death. And Christ was perfect, so He had no weaknesses in faith.

I answer: He indeed used the sacraments, including circumcision and Passover, as well as Holy Baptism. However, it is not so clear regarding the Lord's Supper. To address this concern: (a) Both the perfect and sinners can use sacraments. Even Adam, before the fall, had the tree of life as a sacrament. This is because:

- A sacrament continually brings to mind the promised thing.
- It awakens the certainty of the promises.
- It provides a sweet foretaste of the thing.
- It stimulates and enlivens the approval of the conditions and one's commitment to fulfill them. These aspects also apply to the perfect, and just as Adam could use them, so could the Lord Jesus in this regard.

(b) They sealed all the promises of the covenant of redemption for Christ because sacraments are seals of a covenant. Believers sealed the covenant of grace through Christ, but for Christ, they sealed the Covenant of Redemption and assured Him that through His perfect obedience and satisfaction, He would obtain all the promised blessings for Himself and His children. Christ was thereby sealed, confirming that His offering was acceptable, His satisfaction effective in removing the sins of the chosen ones He had taken upon Himself, and His perfect righteousness powerful in obtaining the right to eternal life for the chosen ones.

XVII. Just as the Lord Jesus had promised to fulfill all that the Lord required, He indeed fulfills it perfectly in action. See Philippians 2:6-8: "who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." Thus, He said, in John 17:4, "I have finished the work which You have given Me to do." And again, in John 19:30, "It is finished."

XVIII. 3. Upon fulfilling the conditions, the Lord Jesus demands the promises, both for Himself and for the chosen ones.

- For Himself: John 17:4, 5: "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."
- For the chosen ones: John 17:24: "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me."

XIX. Here arises a question: Did Christ also merit something for Himself since everything He did and suffered was done and suffered for the chosen ones?

I answer: Supposed matters do not conflict; a matter can have various purposes. In suffering for the chosen ones and fulfilling all righteousness for them, the Lord Jesus displayed such perfect obedience and love for God and the chosen ones that, according to the covenant of redemption, He indeed earned the promised blessings for Himself as the Mediator.

This is evident from:

1. Where there is a covenant with promises under conditions to be fulfilled, the party who fulfills the conditions merits the promised thing. Here is a covenant with promises under conditions, and the Lord Jesus fulfilled the conditions; thus, He also earned all the promises that were made to Him and to the chosen ones.
2. Christ expected a reward: Isaiah 49:4: "Surely my just reward is with the Lord, and my work with my God." There is a reward out of grace, not according to merits, and there is a reward based on justice, work, and merits. Here is a contract, work, justice, and, accordingly, a reward; thus, Christ earned for Himself.

3. The Lord Jesus aimed at glory for Himself as a presented prize: Hebrews 12:2: "who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame." Behold, joy was set before Him on the condition of the cross; He sought that joy; therefore, He endured the cross, thus earning that joy for Himself.
4. This is evident from all those passages where His work is set as the cause of His glory. God exalts Him because Christ humbled Himself. See Isaiah 53:11, 12: "He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong." Also, Psalm 45:8: "You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions."
5. Add to this Philippians 2:8, 9: "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him."

These ways of speaking are so common, and they clearly establish merits that understanding these passages only confirms that Christ did not merely obtain glory as a consequence of something preceding it but also that He earned it.

Knowledge of this covenant is of great benefit.

XX. Thus, we have seen that there is a covenant of redemption between the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ concerning the eternal salvation of the elect: what conditions and promises it had, how willingly the Lord Jesus Christ accepted them, and how perfectly He fulfilled them all. One must not assume that this is merely for the contemplation of the intellect and that having understood it, one may leave it at that. It is the foundation of all firm consolation, joy,

wonder, and the glorification of God. Therefore, we must seek to understand this doctrine well and use it continually. For guidance, take note of these points:

The salvation of the elect is secure.

1. Now the salvation of the elect is firm and unshakable. They are in an unchanging state, confirmed as the chosen angels. Both parties, the Lord God and Christ, are fully satisfied with the agreement regarding their salvation and the means by which they will be brought to it. The condition has been fulfilled by the Mediator. They are in a secure, almighty, faithful hand, not their own, but according to this decree in Christ's keeping. Therefore, who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Who shall annul that Covenant made between Them? O Death, where is your sting? O Hell, where is your victory?

They have nothing to do in this regard.

2. For the elect, there is now nothing to do to earn anything or contribute to obtaining salvation, for all the heavy conditions were placed upon Christ through this covenant. He would bear the punishment; He would fulfill the law for them, preserve them, and lead them to salvation. He would carry out everything, and indeed, He has accomplished it all. On the other hand, all of Christ's merits rest upon the children of God; all the graces are theirs: adoption as children, justification, sanctification, perseverance, and glory. Everything is granted to them according to the content of this covenant, each in its time, manner, and measure. Therefore, they must strive to proclaim this, acknowledging it by exclaiming: "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness" (Psalm 115:1).

Their covenant relationship is rooted in this.

3. The covenant of grace and our covenant relationship with God in Christ has its origin and foundation in this covenant of redemption between God and Christ. From it flows the beginning, middle, and end of a person's salvation. Before anyone existed, before the Gospel was preached to him, everything about when each would be born, how they would be transferred, how much grace, comfort, and holiness they would receive, how many and what kinds of struggles and crosses they would have in this life - all of this was predetermined, and all these things are granted to each person from this covenant. Thus, the elect only need to remain still on one side and let the Lord work. They only need to open their mouths and receive; everything that was encompassed in the articles of this covenant will be continually given to them. On the other side, they must look at this covenant and work from it as they enter into the covenant of grace, making it the foundation of their life. This way, they will act wisely and firmly. They will not rely on the steadfastness of their faith or godliness, as is commonly done. They will acknowledge every grace and influence of the Holy Spirit as originating from this covenant. They will become capable of saying with sensitivity, joy, and love: "For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen" (Romans 11:36).

In this, wonderful love is revealed.

4. Here, an unparalleled love that surpasses all understanding is manifested. To be known and thought of in this covenant, to be given from the Father to the Son, and to be recorded in the Son's book; to be an object of eternal mutual delight between the

Father and Christ for your salvation... that is happiness! That is a wonder! There was no foreseen faith, no good works that moved the parties to remember you in this covenant; there was no compulsion, no coercion, but eternal love and voluntariness. Jeremiah 33:3, "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love." Love moved the Father; love moved the Lord Jesus. It is a covenant of love between Them, who love each other without the loveliness of the object. Oh, how blessed is he who is enclosed in this Covenant, and who is encompassed, illuminated, and warmed by this eternal love, prompting him to reciprocate! Saying, "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:10).

Christ now holds everything in His hand.

5. By the power of this Covenant, the Lord Jesus is the Executor of the salvation of the elect. The Father has entrusted them into His hand. The Son has lovingly accepted them and guarantees that He will lose none of them but will raise them up on the last day (John 6:39). The Lord Jesus is all-powerful, faithful, loving, unchanging, and possesses everything necessary for their salvation. How securely one may place everything in His hand and rest in Him, saying, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1). "The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me" (Psalm 138:8). "You guide me with your counsel, and afterward, you will take me into glory" (Psalm 73:24). "Blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" (Psalm 2:12).

Chapter 8

On the Creation of the World.

Having considered the inner works of God, we now turn to the external works, which are either of nature or of grace. The works of nature include Creation and providence alongside created things. First, we will discuss Creation.

I. The word "create" has various meanings.

(a) It refers to the work of ordinary governance. Isaiah 45:7, "I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil."

(b) It signifies extraordinary acts of God. Jeremiah 31:22, "The Lord has created something new on the earth: A woman will encompass a man."

(c) It represents rebirth and renewal in conversion. Psalm 51:12, "Create in me a clean heart, O God."

(d) Typically, "create" means the production of things either out of nothing, as on the first day, or from unprepared matter, as God did on the last five days.

What Is in the Beginning.

II. When we trace back from our time, we ultimately reach the beginning, beyond which we cannot go. For above that lies nothing but God dwelling in eternity, and eternity is beyond the comprehension of temporal humans. Attempting to grasp it through an extended period of time leads to misunderstanding. The eternal God, desiring to reveal Himself and share His goodness, in accordance with His eternal purpose, brought forth all that exists through His wisdom and omnipotence. So, everything that exists has a beginning, before which there was nothing but God. There was no

infinite light, no indivisible particles, no confused mass, no motion, nor anything else, no matter how it might be named or conceived. See Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." "In the beginning" doesn't mean "before first" or "in an instant." It signifies the very first point of time, which corresponds with the first point of creation. We see this in Psalm 90:2 as well, "Before the mountains were born, before You gave birth to the earth and the world." Before the existence of the world, so to speak, there was a "before," not as a definite time but only as a statement of the starting point of creation. In this "before," the world did not exist, but eternity remained the same, as stated: "from everlasting to everlasting, You are God." The world not existing is brought forth; now, everything that is brought forth had no existence before and thus has a beginning. This is also evident in the expressions "before" in Ephesians 1:9, "before the foundation of the world," and 2 Timothy 1:9, "before the ages began." If there is a "before" in time and "before" the foundation, then there is a beginning of time and a beginning of the world. Thus, the world is not eternal.

The World Is Not Eternal.

III. The world is not only not eternal, but it also could not be eternal. God indeed had the power from eternity to create, but a creature cannot exist without a beginning and, therefore, cannot be eternal. For:

1. The world could not be called "created" if it were eternal, because creating involves bringing something into existence that did not exist before, and in this act of bringing forth, there is necessarily a beginning.
2. Within the created world, while it exists, there is a passage of time. In the progression of time, a moment is the first, and thus,

a creature claiming to exist implies having a beginning.

3. If the world were eternal, it would either exist by its own eternity or by God's eternity. If it existed by its own eternity, there would be two parallel eternities placed side by side, and God would not be the only eternal or the first, even though the Scriptures consistently attribute this uniqueness to Him. If the world existed through God's eternity, then it would be God Himself, and therefore, also omnipotent, omniscient, simple, unchangeable, and so on. Every perfection of God includes within it all His perfections because they are not truly distinct in God but one and the same. Thus, the world cannot be eternal.

When Created.

IV. Counting upwards from our time, we arrive at the beginning, approximately 5,750 years ago. I say approximately because it cannot be precisely determined. Time calculations must rely on the generations of ancestors mentioned in the Holy Scriptures, not the movements of stars. All these generations are recorded in years, without months and days. Thus, it is uncertain at what time of the year the world was created, whether the sun was at its highest or lowest point, whether day and night were of equal length in autumn or spring, or at some other time of the year. These are all speculative conjectures. Most suggest the equinox in spring. Those who propose the equinox in autumn provide the most likely reason. As for me, I do not know.

God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the Creator.

V. The world did not come into existence by itself, for nothing can create itself. Instead, the world was created by God. God is the Creator of all things.

- Isaiah 40:28: "The Creator of the ends of the earth."
- Exodus 20:11: "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth."
- Psalm 121:2: "My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth."
- Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning, God created Elohim, the Triune God."

Because God is one, and the three Persons are the one God, their will and power are one, and all the external work of God is common to the three Persons and is the work of the Triune God. However, there is an appropriation of each work to each Person concerning the particular relation each Person has to that work. Thus, creation is attributed to the Father, redemption to the Son, and sanctification to the Holy Spirit, not to the exclusion but with the express inclusion of the other Persons in that same work. Therefore, even the external work that is attributed to one Person is also attributed to the others.

- The Son created the world: John 1:3: "All things were made through Him (the Word, the Son of God), and without Him was not anything made that was made." Colossians 1:16: "For by Him all things were created." It is not merely as a helper or a means, but as the active Cause Himself, for the word "through" also signifies the first cause. See Romans 11:36: "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things." 1 Corinthians 1:9: "God is faithful, by whom you were called."
- The creation is also attributed to the Holy Spirit: Genesis 1:2: "The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." Psalm 33:6: "By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host."

Since creation is a work of the holy Trinity, we find in Genesis 1:26: "Let Us make man." Ecclesiastes 12:1: "Remember your Creator." Isaiah 44:5: "Your Makers are your husbands."

Creating is a unique work of God.

VI. Creating is a distinct work of God, performed by Him alone, and by no one else. The angels are not co-creators, and the creative power cannot be imparted to anyone else. Some might wish to assert otherwise to defend their transubstantiation doctrine, while others aim to deny the Holy Trinity. However, this is not the case, nor can it be, for the following reasons:

Angels are not co-creators. Evidence:

1. The Scripture explicitly states that the act of creation belongs solely to God, excluding all others. Isaiah 44:24: "I am the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself." Isaiah 45:12: "I made the earth and created man on it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens."
2. Creation sets God apart from everything else as an inseparable and unshareable power. Jeremiah 10:11, 10, 12: "The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish. But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King. ... It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens." Psalm 96:5: "All the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens."
3. Creation involves an infinite power, as evident in Romans 1:20: "For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world." Infinite power is the infinite God Himself; if God could impart

such infinite, eternal power to someone, He could create more eternal gods, which is absurd. On the other hand, the creature is finite and incapable of containing or receiving the infinite.

4. Every creature requires something to be present and capable within it to create something from it or in it. A painter cannot paint an image on water. However, creating is the act of bringing something into existence from absolute nothingness, shaping it as needed. Thus, it is impossible to impart the power of creation to a creature. When it is said that humans performed miracles, which require infinite power, they did not possess such infinite inherent power. They were only moral agents, inwardly convinced of God's will and moved by God to declare that will. They simply said: "Rise up, be healed, walk," and then God performed the miracle through His power in response to their words. This is affirmed by Peter in Acts 3:12: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk?"
5. Performing miracles is a work that belongs exclusively to God. Psalm 77:15: "You are the God who works wonders." Psalm 72:18: "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things." Thus, it becomes evident that the power of creation cannot be imparted to anyone, and God alone is the Creator.

As little as the creative power can be imparted to anyone, so too, tools are of little use in creation. What would an instrument accomplish when God brings something into existence from nothing, and that with a single word? There is neither a material object nor time involved, for in the transition from nothing to something, there is no time, and an instrument requires both to be effective.

Objection: Angels also participated in creation.

Genesis 1:26: "Let us make man." God couldn't speak to Himself, so He spoke to the angels. Answer: This is evidence of the Trinity of the Persons. Man was not created in the image of angels.

Creation occurred from nothing.

VII. The world was created by God, not from an infinite air, not from indivisible particles, not from an eternal, unsuitable mass, or anything else by whatever name it might be called. Such ideas were fabrications of the heathens who adhered to the principle: nothing comes from nothing. While this holds true for finite creatures and natural forces, it does not apply to the infinite and almighty God. He brought everything into existence from nothing. This nothingness serves as the terminus a quo, the point from which creation originated, not as the substance from which it was formed. The apostle demonstrates this in Hebrews 11:3: "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible." Natural reason teaches the concatenation of causes, ultimately leading to God as the first cause of everything. However, natural understanding cannot comprehend how something can come from nothing, how God, through a single word, through a single command, made everything exist. This we understand through faith. We also have the order of creation confirmed by Moses' account. The pagan physician Galen, reading the first chapter of Genesis, Gen. 1, said: "Moses says much but proves little." It is through faith that we understand, affirm, and firmly establish that *ta blepomena ta blepomena*, things that are seen, have come to be *mee ek phainomenoon*, from things that are not seen, that is, a Greek way of speaking, which means essentially, from nothing. It is as if it said: *ta onta Exod. onk ontwn*, being from non-being, which is the same as being from nothing. This manner of speaking is found in Matthew 9:33, "Never was anything like this

seen in Israel," which means, not that something similar had occurred before, but rather, that this has never happened before. To understand that something is formed from something can be grasped by reason, but faith is needed to firmly establish that things existing were brought forth from nothing by God, who calls the things that are not as though they were, Romans 4:17. He speaks, and it is done; He commands, and it stands fast, Psalm 33:9.

And also:

(a) If something had existed before creation, it must have either been created or uncreated; if created, it was also brought from nothing, and if uncreated, it was eternal and independent, essentially God itself, and then God would have brought the world forth from something that was not His own, making the substance of the world to this day not His own—this would be the most absurd of absurdities. Consider what we have said in paragraphs 2 and 3 above.

(b) Scripture clearly states in Revelation 4:11, "You have created all things." This encompasses everything.

By God's omnipotence, freedom, wisdom

VIII. The creation of the world originated from:

(a) Almighty power alone, with just a word through His almighty will, through His single command. There was light, and so on, all without any fatigue. Isaiah 40:28 asks, "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary."

(b) His absolute freedom. God could have created the world. He could also have refrained from doing so. He could have created it more than 5,750 years ago. He could have created it later. He could have made more worlds, but He created only this one, and at this time, as it was brought forth according to His voluntary decree.

(c) An infinite wisdom that cannot be fully comprehended in the entire universe, in the order, movement, concatenation of sub-causes, or even in the smallest flower, although it can be partially seen in them. But one must ultimately exclaim: Psalm 104:24, "O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you made them all." This wisdom is displayed wonderfully in the order in which each thing was created in the beginning.

In six days.

IX. God could have created everything in an instant, as soon as He brought forth the confused mass, in that perfect state as it was on the seventh day. But He chose to create one thing after another, over the span of six days, and thus gave man an example to work for six days and rest on the seventh, as the reason is given in Exodus 20:11, "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested; therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." However, whether God spent an entire day on each work or created each work in an instant is not described. God could have commanded it in an instant, and He could have brought it forth from nothing in an instant. But when one thing is brought forth from another, the creature requires time to move. The air needed time to expand from the confused mass, which was small in comparison to the entire sphere, as it spread in all directions, originating from the center and forming the immense surrounding area. The waters needed time to separate into upper and lower parts. The trees needed

time to grow from the earth to their height, and so on. But how much time was spent on each day's work cannot be said. Yet, so that the angels who rejoiced over each day would have material to contemplate the wisdom and power of God in creating things, and so that the six days of creation would serve as an example for man's six days of labor, and because God reviewed and approved His work at the end of each day, with only the seventh day being described as a day of rest, it seems likely to me that one day was spent on each work.

What to note in creation in general.

X. Because the Lord has allowed us to describe creation in such detail, it is our duty to consider it with attention. To this end, these general observations are useful:

1. The first verse, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," is not a title or a brief summary of creation; it is a division of the creatures. By heaven, the third heaven is meant, and by earth, the globe with the visible heavens.
2. On the first day, creation was brought forth from absolute Nothing, and on the other days, God made everything emerge from that unformed mass and inadequate substance.
3. In creation, God first dealt with lifeless things on the first four days, and then with living creatures on the last two days.
4. In creating lifeless things, God began with the finest—light—and progressed to the air, from the air to the waters, and from the waters to the earth, the coarsest. However, in creating living creatures, the Lord began with the humblest—the irrational animals—and ended with the most glorious—the human. And on each day.

5. In the creation of each day, several things are to be noted: (a) The command: "Let there be." (b) The result: "And it was so." (c) The approval that it was good. (d) The purpose for which it would serve. (e) The blessing.
6. In the creation of each thing, three aspects are to be considered: (a) Production, by which it came into existence. (b) Formation, by which it became such a creature. (c) Embellishment, by which it became beautiful and pleasing.
7. Observe throughout the work that God intended to create humans and glorify them extraordinarily. To accomplish this, He prepared such a grand structure and space for them, arranged everything in order, and adorned it from top to bottom. When everything was ready, the Lord created humans and placed them over the work of His hands to rule over it.

XI. Moving on to the creatures of each day, we find that on the first day, God created three things: the third heaven, the chaotic mass, and light.

1. On the first day, the third heaven was created. On the first day, God created the third heaven. In the beginning, God created the heaven. This does not refer to the atmosphere or the firmament because those were created later. It signifies the third heaven, also known as the heaven of heavens, mentioned in 1 Kings 8:27, the third heaven in 2 Corinthians 12:2, the paradise by analogy in Luke 23:43, the Father's house in John 14:2, and the highest or heaven in Hebrews 1:3. I do not dare to say much about this place because it is not described (I speak of the structure, not the goods and blessings). But what we do know is that the third heaven was created. In 2 Corinthians 5:1, we read, "We know that ... we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Hebrews 11:10 says, "He was

looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God." That this heaven was created in the beginning, during the six-day creation, is evident from Matthew 25:34, "Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Besides, we know that it is exceedingly glorious, not only because of the heavenly blessings that will fill the souls of redeemed humans in perfect communion with God but also in terms of the place itself. The glorified human will retain his body, and therefore, that place will have everything that will be most enjoyable for the body. It is God's masterpiece, as Hebrews 11:10 says. Hence, we believe it will surpass earthly paradises immeasurably. However, how it will be there is hidden from us.

2. The unformed mass. The second work on the first day was the unformed mass; we call it unformed concerning its subsequent form. It was "tohoe vabohoe," formless and empty; the initial substance from which everything was later brought forth, not through some inherent motion that would have shaped everything on its own, nor could it have formed itself. Instead, everything emerged from it by the Almighty power of God, for it is explicitly stated: "The Spirit of God Merachepheth," hovered and formed over the waters, which covered that mass entirely. The pagans referred to this mass as "chaos," the intermingled seeds of all things.
3. The light. The third work on the first day is light. This light was not a random occurrence without a subject because that goes against the nature of randomness. It was not a luminous cloud either since the clouds had not yet been created. It also wasn't above that mass because there was no place outside of it. Instead, it was something that circled around the outer edge of

the mass in a single day, thus creating day and night. I can better tell you what light is in its manifestation than what it is in its inner form and nature. Paul says in Ephesians 5:13, "But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible."

XII. On the second day, God created two things.

1. The firmament. God created the firmament. The mass was not suitable to be a dwelling place for humans, and the extraordinary wisdom of God had not yet been revealed. Therefore, God created more space by bringing forth a breath of air from the mass and bounded it with an immeasurable expanse. There was nothing beyond this boundary, and the determination of this space did not result from anything external but was self-determined. From the center or midpoint to the outermost edge, there was such a distance as God determined, and beyond that, there is and was no place. This firmament is divided into two heavens: the paradise of God is the third heaven, the first heaven stretches from the earth to a certain part in the sky, but we do not know how far. The second heaven is far from there, where the first heaven ends upwards, and it is the abode of the sun, moon, and stars, referred to as the firmament. We leave the further divisions of the firmament to the speculations of astronomers.
2. The separation of the waters. The second work on the second day was the separation of the waters, those below the firmament and those above the firmament. One should not imagine that there are waters above the stars and beyond the utmost boundary, for above the utmost boundary, there is no place, and the edge ends there. It is likely that the air becomes finer the farther it is from the center. The waters above the firmament are

the clouds, and they float at varying heights. They have their boundary in the height above which they cannot ascend. In this text, the word "lem" means "from above," specifically above the firmament or at the top of the firmament but not beyond the realm of the stars. Mozes mentions only two waters, dividing them into lower and upper. Therefore, the notion of waters above the stars should be dismissed, as Moses would have had to speak of three waters – upper, middle, and lower – if that were the case.

XIII. On the third day, God accomplished two things.

1. The dry land. God separated the lower waters from the earth. He formed pits in the earth here and there, where the flowing waters gathered. As a result, dry land emerged everywhere, becoming a suitable dwelling place for humans and animals. The gathering of the waters, the Lord called "sea," and He set boundaries for it everywhere. Even though the waters may be higher than the shores that contain them, they do not overflow due to the order set for them. Together, these elements form a circle.
2. With every kind of living vegetation. The second work on the third day was that God adorned the dry land with trees and plants of all kinds, adorning the face of the earth with their youthful colors and fragrances, far more glorious than the earth is today, cursed by the Lord. Each had its beauty, even thistles, thorns, and poisonous plants, which were not as abundant before the curse but multiplied afterward, to the detriment of humans and animals.

Sun, moon, and stars.

XIV. On the fourth day, God created the sun, moon, and stars.

The sun and the moon are called the two great lights. It does not say, "the two largest bodies," but "lights." Whether they are the largest bodies, let astronomers debate. The Bible says "great lights," and that they are great is beyond dispute. The notion that these luminaries, or the sun alone, stand still while the earth rotates is a fanciful idea of those who have turned their heads too much. We believe in Holy Scripture, and in that faith, we understand that the world was prepared by the Word of God. Scripture states that the earth stands firm: Psalm 104:5, "He established the earth upon its foundations; it will not be moved forever." Scripture also states that the sun revolves: Psalm 19:6, 7, "It (the sun) rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth." When the sun stands still, it is a miraculous event, as in Joshua 10:13, "So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped."

Their purpose. The purpose of these luminaries is threefold:

(1) To distinguish between day and night.

(2) To serve as signs, for appointed seasons, days, and years.

(3) To make the earth fruitful through their influence: Hosea 2:20, "I will respond to the heavens, and they will respond to the earth."

It is not for predicting future events. God indeed provides extraordinary signs in the heavens for warning and awe, as in Matthew 24:29-30. These signs may also serve for instruction, as in Matthew 2:2. Observing the light of the stars and the moon can provide insight into the temperate or intemperate nature of the weather, allowing predictions of near good or bad weather, as in Luke 12:54-55. However, predicting future events, such as the

actions of human free will, outcomes of wars, the deaths of individuals, fortune or misfortune, etc., is:

- A vanity contradicted by experience. If someone gradually foretells something, it is not based on the stars but rather on guessing or the secret workings of Satan to reinforce people's superstitions and draw them away from God.
- It is against God's explicit command. Jeremiah 10:2 warns, "Learn not the way of the nations, nor be dismayed at the signs of the heavens because the nations are dismayed at them."

Regarding the question of how God created the two great lights on the fourth day, even though He had created light on the first day, we respond that God, on the first day, created light and, on the fourth day, enclosed it within the sun, much like placing a candle in a lantern. The sun, by shining on the moon, then reflects that light back to the earth.

XV. On the fifth day, God began to create living creatures: the fish and the birds. Fishes were brought forth from the water, and perhaps some of the birds from the waters, as stated in Genesis 1:20. And some from the earth, as mentioned in Genesis 2:19. Those amphibious creatures, which dwell both on land and in the water, evidently originated from both sources.

XVI. On the sixth day, God created the quadrupeds, each with their unique natures and forms, as well as the creeping creatures, whether with feet or without. We believe that during this time, God also created all those pests and vermin, which, according to the opinion of many, emerge from decay or the influence of the heavens. God endowed the animals of the earth with five external senses and the sense of touch. Although they cannot reason and reflect like humans, they do possess feelings in their own way. Who can deny that a dog

sees, smells, hears, tastes, walks, displays friendliness or anger, albeit not in a human manner? Therefore, their sensory perception, which is evident in their behavior, is as real as their other senses. The Scriptures also affirm this in many places: Job 39:6, 7, Psalm 104:11.

Last of all, God created the most glorious creature on the earth, namely, humans. We will address this separately in the following.

On the seventh day, rest.

XVII. After everything was accomplished in six days, the Lord instituted the seventh day and recounted what He had done on that day—rested from all His work, which He had created (Genesis 2:3). Everything was so perfect that nothing was lacking, and there was no need to add anything more. He rested; He did not create any new creatures. He was not tired, for "the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired" (Isaiah 40:28). But, speaking in human terms, He surveyed what He had made, and He delighted in His work (Exodus 31:17), "Because the LORD has made the heavens and the earth in six days, and on the seventh day, He rested and was refreshed." The Lord, therefore, consecrated the seven days to each other, set this as an example of imitation for mankind, and commanded humans to labor for six days and rest on the seventh day. Throughout the Word of God, the number seven generally represents the perfection of a matter. Recognizing this can help clarify the meaning in passages where the number seven appears, reducing the temptation to search for hidden meanings and making fewer misinterpretations.

The contemplation of creation is beneficial.

XVIII. Everything we have spoken of regarding creation is not merely to inform you or satisfy your curiosity, but rather to guide you from

visible things to the Unseen and to make you see and acknowledge the greatness, power, glory, and goodness of the Lord. "Who is wise? Let him give heed to these things, and let them consider the lovingkindnesses of the LORD" (Psalm 107:43). God's perfections are clearly revealed in His creation, and even the pagans could recognize them. How they shame many Christians who must be aware that they have never been diligent in this regard and have never truly seen the Creator through His creation. Come, contemplate this magnificent structure, see therein His majesty and excellency. Above all, remember that you are His creation, and that He has absolute authority over you. You are bound to be of service to your Maker with all that you are. How dreadful, unnatural, and unspeakably abhorrent it is that you, so needy and dependent on your Maker, dare to sin against such a God, despising Him, rejecting His communion, not fearing His wrath, and then come to misuse His creation to which you have lost your rights through sin. This is sufficient to recognize the magnitude of sin, to loathe it, and to sink into shame, fear, and trembling.

XIX. All of humanity's salvation is in its Creator.

1. From the contemplation of God as the Creator, it becomes clear that all your safety, freedom, rest, peace, and salvation exist in the goodness and love of your Maker toward you. As long as you are an object of your Maker's wrath, all His creatures are opposed to you, each waiting for permission to harm you. Everything you touch groans against you and seems dissatisfied, unwilling to be touched by you, but eager to be used against you. Nothing can give you peace when your Maker is displeased with you; a Cain's fear must come upon you. However, when your Maker is reconciled with you in Christ and becomes your satisfied Father, then you are truly free, for everything is satisfied with you. Job 5:23 says, "You shall be in league

with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you." Therefore, earnestly seek this reconciliation by accepting the precious Savior, Jesus Christ. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

XX. The creation is a basis for trust.

2. And to you, children of God, both the strong and the weak, and to those in whom there is only a small beginning of spiritual life in truth, I address this. Here is a solid foundation of comfort and trust in the Lord, in prosperity and adversity, in abundance and poverty, in times of peace and persecution, in the present and the future. Your Maker is your Husband (Isaiah 54:5), and "The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it" (Psalm 24:1). Since the Lord, your Father, Creator, and Owner of the entire world and everything in it, willingly serves all things, how can anything be lacking for you? How can any creature harm you? "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Romans 8:31). "When He keeps quiet, who then can condemn?" (Job 34:29). So, set your confidence in Him. The Lord knows me and has adopted me as His child, and I know this through the Holy Spirit who has been given to me, bringing light and life to my soul, however small it may be. The Lord is the Creator of heaven and earth; everything is His and is dedicated to His service. Therefore, nothing will be lacking for me; everything will be well, for the Lord loves me on the one hand, and on the other hand, He is willing and able to help me. He has promised and said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). Therefore, rest in this assurance. If things do not go as you wish, look to your Maker, submit to His holy will, and come to Him as His creature, His child. Pray, wait, rely on Him, and always place your trust in the Lord who created heaven and earth.

XXI. The children of God have ownership of everything.

3. Now, use everything as God's creatures. The world belongs to you, children of God (1 Corinthians 3:22), but only because you belong to Christ, both in terms of ownership and use. God remains the Owner of everything. Beware of cruelty toward creation, avoid wasteful and willful destruction of it, for it belongs to the Lord. Be cautious of misusing creation through indulgence, drunkenness, extravagance, and immorality because it belongs to God. But use it freely, for necessity and honorable pleasure, in seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and clothing. Know that three words are written on every creature, and each time they call out to you: Receive, Give Back, Avoid. Accept what God gives you. Give it back through thanksgiving to the One from whom it came. Avoid misusing it and sinning in it.

XXII. In creation, God's glory is revealed.

4. Train yourself to see God in His creation, be inspired to praise Him in His glory, power, wisdom, and goodness, with heart, mouth, and deeds, saying: "How many are Your works, O LORD! You have made them all in wisdom; the earth is full of Your possessions" (Psalm 104:24). Develop a reverent disposition of the heart from the consideration of these attributes of God manifested in creation and bow down in reverence for Him. Come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker (Psalm 95:6). This was the work of the angels (Job 38:4, 7). "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" In this, a person after God's own heart finds delight and praises God in the sight of His creation (Psalm 8:2, 4, 5, 7). "O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth, who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!" (Psalm 8:2) When I look at Your heavens, the work of Your

fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; "What is man, that You remember him? Or the son of man, that You are concerned about him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God, and You crown him with glory and majesty!" (Psalm 8:3, 4, 5, 7). "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands" (Psalm 19:2). "Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge" (Psalm 19:3).

XXIII. Although the Lord reveals Himself in a particular and more glorious way in the work of redemption compared to creation and providence over created things, the heavens and the earth were not created in vain. They exist not merely to serve humanity while on this earth, but rather, they exist for the glory of their Maker. However, this glory is not perceived through natural means but spiritually.

(a) An unregenerate person contemplates the heavens, the earth, and God's governance over them in a natural manner. They remain entangled in creation and seldom ascend to the Creator. And even if they do, it is with a worldly heart and perspective, seeing little of God in it. Even if they do catch a glimpse of God, they fail to glorify Him.

The Gentiles scattered across the earth, those who have no knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, see God in the works of nature (Romans 1:20). "For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made."

(b) However, someone with enlightened eyes of understanding, who knows and loves God, esteems God as their God. They see everything, every creature and every movement, as letters and voices declaring the glory of their God and Father. Because they do not linger in creation but move beyond it, the comparison between

natural and spiritual matters becomes less significant. What matters most is how God reveals Himself through and within the created.

Adam, in his state of innocence before the fall and redemption, did not view the heavens, the earth, and God's governance as a means to reflect upon the glory of his Creator and offer praise.

God commands it.

XXIV. (c) God often directs His church to consider His works of creation and preservation to know Him better. Jeremiah 5:22, 24 says, "Do you not fear Me? declares the LORD. Do you not tremble in My presence? For I have placed the sand as a boundary for the sea, An eternal decree, so it cannot cross over it. Though the waves toss, yet they cannot prevail; Though they roar, yet they cannot cross over it... They do not say in their heart, 'Let us now fear the LORD our God, Who gives rain in its season, Both the autumn rain and the spring rain, Who keeps for us The appointed weeks of the harvest.'"

Isaiah 45:12 declares, "It is I who made the earth, and created man upon it. I am He—My hands stretched out the heavens, And all their host I have commanded."

The saints have done so.

(d) The holy men of God often had their eyes fixed on the works of nature, glorifying God because of them. Nehemiah 9:5-6 states, "Then the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodia, Shebaniah and Pethahiah, said, 'Arise, bless the LORD your God forever and ever! O may Your glorious name be blessed and exalted above all blessing and praise! You alone are the LORD. You have made the heavens, The heaven of heavens with all their host, The earth and all that is on it, The seas and all that is in them. You

give life to all of them And the heavenly host bows down before You."

David does the same in Psalm 104, beginning with, "Bless the LORD, O my soul!" He then proceeds to display the glory of the Lord in the maintenance and governance of both lifeless and living creatures, concluding with, "Bless the LORD, O my soul! Hallelujah."

The prophet laid this foundation for the trust of the church, saying in Psalm 124:8, "Our help is in the name of the LORD, Who made heaven and earth."

Encouragement to Contemplate.

XXV. Therefore, lovers of God's glory, do not hesitate to see God in His creation and in His marvelous governance of heaven and earth. Do not merely pass over it as if there was nothing to see, as many do, imitating the unreasoning animals of the earth, regarding it as childish or less spiritual. No, if you observe it wisely with a spiritual eye, whether you ascend from below, using the observation of creation to come to God, or if you descend with your soul, dwelling near God, and turn your gaze toward creation, you will find more in it than any human can express. However, if the Lord does not, by His Holy Spirit, touch your soul, the entire structure and all His governance will remain a closed book to you, just as the Holy Scriptures would be in such a case. But when the Lord's Spirit leads you, God will appear to you in an incomprehensibly glorious manner within it.

How to Contemplate.

XXVI. Allow yourself, with an attentive soul that is accustomed to continually focus on God and glorify Him, to reflect on all the works

of God.

(a) Take a godly soul outdoors and lift your eyes up to the immeasurable expanse of the heavens, contemplating the vastness it contains, and consider yourself as a mere grain of sand within it.

(b) Observe the beautiful face of the sky: how delightful is the distant, heavenly blue; the airy clouds; the graceful moon; the countless multitude of twinkling stars. Consider the countenance of the sky as a whole. Think of the serene evening, the attentive night, the lovely dawn, or the experience of sitting or walking in the shade of a dense forest. Listen to the gentle rustling of the wind through the trees, and admire the vast vistas through the towering trees, or the boundless expanse from a solitary hill or distant land. Here you see green meadows teeming with animals, there cultivated fields adorned with colorful and fragrant blossoms or laden with precious fruits. Yonder, mountains with valleys interspersed. Walk by the seashore or sit beside a gently flowing stream, and everywhere, you'll hear the joyful songs of birds with diverse wings and voices. If the soul is even somewhat spiritual, will it not be drawn closer to its Creator and Father through this? Will it not evoke countless emotions within? Will it not perceive more than it can express, and will the joyful beginnings of morning and evening not return it home with gladness and a heart full of praise?

(c) Take note of the indescribable variety of colors, scents, tastes, voices, forms, birds, fish, animals, crawling creatures, leaves on trees, and blades of grass in the fields. Compare any two of them, and they will differ!

(d) Pay attention to the unfathomable interdependence of underlying causes, how one serves and assists the other: the heavens serve the earth, and on earth, one thing serves another. As Hosea 2:20, 21

states, "I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In lovingkindness and in compassion, And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the LORD."

When you sit at a table to eat, has not the entire structure of heaven and earth been involved in providing for you? How many countless people have served you in this endeavor, from those who prepared the table to those who provided the linen, knives, dishes, spoons, glasses, bread, meat, fruits, wine, and beer? How many hands did it pass through before it arrived at your table? But who set all of these to work and made them serve you in the sweat of their faces? Behold, behold the good hand of your Father, who gave life to the birds, beasts, and fish, arranged for them to provide sustenance for you, sent people to catch them, bring them to you, and prepare them, had a tree planted for you, and commanded all His creatures not to pluck that apple, that cluster of grapes, etc., but to leave it hanging until it was ripe, even if it was a thousand miles away from your dwelling. Is all of this not suitable to reveal the hand and honor of God to you in various ways, and does it not uplift a God-loving soul?

(e) Pay attention to the mountain peaks, the treetops, the tower spires, the tips of the blades of grass. Where do they point? Is it not upwards? Does it not teach you not to remain among the creatures but, looking beyond them, to know the Lord God, to love Him, to delight in Him, and to give Him honor and glory? No need for in-depth study to consider what you can see and learn from here or there. The Holy Spirit, who has sanctified the soul of a child of God, reveals many glorious attributes of God without effort and allows them to be seen more clearly and in a different way than even the most agile naturalist could show you. Indeed, a godly farmer can see

a thousand times more in this than a natural scientist who observes the stars or studies plants and animals.

What Reveals Itself of God and Its Power on the Heart.

XXVII. (f) In this, it can be seen and clearly revealed, undeniably and intimately, that God exists. And the concept of God's being is more than one can express. It proclaims to us, and we behold the eternal power of God (Romans 1:20). With a single word, He created everything and, through the influence of His power, flows into the existence and movement of every one of the countless creatures. This vision is too wondrous for us. In it, we see an unfathomable wisdom, immeasurable omnipotence, and the marvelous goodness of God, in whose presence we are lost in amazement.

A mindful God-fearing person does not perceive these and other attributes of God primarily through reasoning but with a glance. The conclusion, "God exists, and God is like this," is not left in the dark. The Lord reveals Himself as clearly in these creations and actions to the soul as light does to the eye of the body. If we do not see all this in such a way, if we do not ascend to the Lord with wonder, contentment, and joy, or if we do not observe His glory in the creatures from above and glorify Him for it, it is a sign of our spiritual lifelessness. It would be more natural than spiritual to imagine that we cannot have spiritual insight into the creatures of God, perhaps because we ourselves remain within the creatures or draw only a dim conclusion from them, lacking the experience to see the glory of the Lord from below or above with an enlightened spiritual heart.

XXVIII. (g) When a lover of God ascends through the creatures, they see more and more of the glory of God, beyond what the creature can teach them externally. They lose sight of the creature and end in the

Creator, recognizing that His glory is too great to be confined within this narrow circle. Truly, would God dwell on earth? "Behold, the heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain You" (1 Kings 8:27). Will anyone declare His glory? All thoughts are too narrow; all words are too small. One must say, "His greatness is unsearchable" (Psalm 145:3, 5). And if God has made the earth below, the expanse above, and all space so glorious for His own glory, His glory is even more evident in the third heaven, in that city of which He is the Artist and Builder. Everything there is glorious in every way. The Lord Jesus has been received in glory and is seated at the right hand of the Majesty in the highest heavens. The angels are the most excellent creatures, excelling in glory. The bodies of the godly will be conformed to the glorified body of Christ and will be fully revealed in glory, achieving the imperishable crown of glory. God's glory illuminates the entire new Jerusalem. It is so great that when Paul was caught up to the third heaven, all he brought back was that he had heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak (2 Corinthians 12:4). By contemplating this through faith, one can join in thought with that glorified multitude in heaven, bowing down before the Lord, taking His crown, casting it down as well, and saying, "Hallelujah, to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be praise and honor and glory and power forever and ever!" (Revelation 5:13). But even then, one can still say that all of this is nothing compared to the infinite glory that God has in Himself. And thus, one must end in wonder: "You who have set Your glory above the heavens! Your glory is infinite! Therefore, Yours is the glory and majesty, power and might, now and for all eternity! Amen."

Chapter 9

Of Angels and Devils.

Among all creatures, angels and humans are the most perfect; therefore, we will discuss them separately, starting with angels.

1. Angel. The Hebrew word for angel is "Maleach," which is used for various beings in the Word. (a) The Lord Jesus Christ is called the Angel in whom the Name (Jehovah) resides: Exodus 23:21, Isaiah 63:9. The Angel of God's presence. Malachi 3:1. The Angel of the covenant. (b) The teachers. Malachi 2:7. The priest is an angel of the Lord of hosts. (c) A messenger. Job 1:14. (d) The immaterial beings.

Angels. In 1 Chronicles 21:16, it is written: "When David lifted his eyes, he saw the Angel of the Lord standing between heaven and earth, with his drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem."

The Greek word for angels is "Angelos," which means two or three times a messenger and otherwise always refers to immaterial beings known as angels, even without any specific mission. It is a term as proper to that kind as the word "human" is to the human race, such that it denotes not an office but spiritual beings distinct from humans. 1 Corinthians 4:9 says, "We have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men." In 1 Corinthians 13:1, it mentions "tongues of men and of angels."

Isangeloi, like Angels. Luke 20:36. In the resurrection, they (humans) neither marry nor are given in marriage... But they are like

angels of God in heaven. Matthew 12:30. These immaterial beings are also called Spirits. Hebrew ruach. Greek pneuma; with this word, various beings are referred to: (a) God, John 4:24. (b) The third Person in the Divine Being, Psalm 33:6, 1 John 5:7. (c) The soul of man, Psalm 77:4, Acts 7:59. (d) The wind, Psalm 1:4, John 3:8. (e) But most commonly and universally, it signifies the angels, immaterial beings. Job 4:15. A spirit passed before my face. Hebrews 1:14. Are they not all ministering spirits? Acts 19:15. But the evil spirit said. This name properly belongs to them, just as "angel" does, and not by analogy. God, who gives each thing a name as He pleases, has given such names to these beings, and these names signify those beings. Names become common through use, so there's no need to anxiously or cunningly seek out similes or explanations. Thus, we know what the word "Angel" or "Spirit" means and what we understand by it here.

II. The existence of angels needs no proof for those who believe in the Scriptures and do not shamelessly reject the testimonies and history of the nations. However, if anyone, like the Sadducees, says that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, Acts 23:8, let them not be ashamed to be counted among them. They are created, for everything that exists is either Creator or creature. They are not the Creator, so they are creatures and created. As Paul says in Colossians 1:16, "For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him." However, on what day of creation cannot be said with certainty, but we do know that they were not created before the beginning because before that, there was nothing but God, dwelling in eternity, and every creature has a permanence that takes it further from its beginning as time goes on. They were also not created after the six days because God completed everything in that time. It is

most likely that they were created on the first day along with the third heaven, of which they are the lords (Luke 2:13), for when the Lord brought forth everything from the unformed lump in the following days, they were already there. When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy (Job 38:4-7). In the beginning, God created only one man, and from that one, a second, and from those two, the countless multitude of humans was begotten. But God created all the angels at once, in an unimaginable multitude. There are many thousands of angels (Hebrews 12:22). God's chariots (angels, 2 Kings 6:17) are twice ten thousand, thousands doubled (Psalm 68:18). Thousands upon thousands served Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him (Daniel 7:10).

Description.

III. An angel is an immaterial and bodiless substance, created by God and endowed with excellent intelligence, will, and power.

Is a substance. An angel is a substance. This is evident because having intelligence, will, and power, and performing intelligent, powerful actions constitutes substance; this is allowed by all. Now, an angel is that and does that, which we will abundantly demonstrate in the following; therefore, an angel is a substance. However, we do not know their form, their shape, by which they are what they are, their inner being. But what we do know is that their attributes and qualities, intelligence, will, power, goodness, wisdom, etc., are distinct from the essence of the angels themselves and not the angels themselves, for singularity or simplicity is an incommunicable attribute of God. Furthermore, we cannot penetrate further into their essence or being because it has not been revealed to us. Since it is beyond the reach of our understanding, we should not venture into

things we have not seen but exercise moderation so as not to corrupt ourselves and others.

Immaterial. Angels are immaterial, bodiless substances. In their nature, they are spirits and not essentially united with a body. A body is that which is extended in three dimensions: length, width, and height. We completely exclude this from angels, no matter how small or refined a body one might conceive; they have no connection with it whatsoever. Luke 24:39: "A spirit does not have flesh and bones." They are created by God to exist on their own, not united with a body.

The human soul is also immaterial, a spirit, just like the angels. It completely lacks three-dimensionality and extension. It can also exist without a body and continues to exist after the death of a person. However, it is not an angel after death; just as there are various types of bodies, the soul is a different kind of spirit. It shares the spirituality and immateriality with the angels but of a lower nature. However, the essential difference between the two is hidden from us. We do not have a perfect knowledge of the form and nature of our souls, but we do know that they are not angels, nor are they ever referred to as such. Hebrews 12:22, 23: "But you have come to...the innumerable angels in festal gathering."

Have appeared in bodies.

IV. Although angels are immaterial and therefore not located in a place like bodies through the surrounding of the air or anything else, they have indeed appeared in bodies. These were not mere shadows or phantoms in which they often appeared, but real bodies in which they walked, sat, spoke, ate, wrestled, or touched bodies. The saints to whom they appeared were not unconscious or asleep (although they also appeared to them in bodily form in dreams or ecstasies),

but they were awake, spoke, walked, stood, and interacted with them as if they were real humans. However, we do not know where they obtained these bodies for that time, nor do I wish to speculate about it. Although they were true bodies with which they interacted with humans, they were not essentially united with them, just as the soul is not essentially united with the body. They moved those bodies not formally, as essential, but efficiently, as the active causes of those movements, just as a person moves all the gears in his watch. This was done so that they might meet humans in their state and interact familiarly with them.

Are always in one place at a time.

V. Although angels are immaterial and therefore not in a place, as bodies are through the surrounding of the air or something else, they are nonetheless in a place or in a manner that corresponds to their nature and cannot be understood by us who are physical. However, we know that they are elsewhere, for that which is nowhere does not exist, and that which is everywhere without extension is God. When they are in one place, they are not in another. When we change our place with our bodies, our souls also change their place. When a godly person dies, his soul does not remain on earth but resides in the third heaven. When a godless person dies, his soul goes to hell and does not stay on earth. Thus, a spirit changes place just as humans do. When the angel was placed to the east of the Garden of Eden, he was there, not in heaven (Genesis 3:24). When the angel of the Lord stood on the right side of the altar speaking to Zacharias, he was not in Nazareth (Luke 1:21). When the angel Gabriel was sent to Nazareth and came to Mary (Luke 1:26, 28), he was not in Jerusalem. When the angels of God ascend and descend (John 1:51), they change places. Thus, they are always in a certain "there" and move from one "there" to another. It is even more foolish to think

that a spirit is everywhere it thinks. This presupposes that it is in a certain place. Then the devil would still be in heaven because he can think about being there and what it was like. Then humans would be without a soul if it thinks in another place. When a human soul thinks in different places, the soul does not go there; the person brings distant places and things into their imagination, and the soul thinks about what is presented in the imagination. Therefore, an angel also thinks about distant things in a way that corresponds to its nature and is hidden from us because we do not know its form.

They are intelligent.

VI. Angels are intelligent creatures, far superior to humans in their intelligence. Therefore, the wise woman of Tekoa said to David, "My lord has wisdom like the wisdom of an angel of God" (2 Samuel 14:20). Their knowledge can be either natural or acquired. By their nature, angels in heaven always behold the face of the Father (Matthew 18:10). However, their knowledge of things that they do not naturally know is gained through revelation or experience. The Lord Jesus revealed the mysteries of future events to an angel and sent him to make them known to John (Revelation 1:1). Through the church, the manifold wisdom of God is made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 3:10).

Yet, they do not know everything. Their knowledge is finite, and there are many things that remain hidden from them.

(a) They do not naturally know future events that will occur by the free will of humans and with respect to secondary causes. This is an attribute that does not belong to God. Isaiah 41:23 says, "Declare the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods." Mark 13:32 states, "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven."

(b) They do not know the heart, the free will, or the thoughts of humans through an inherent act of knowledge. For:

(1) This knowledge belongs solely to God. 2 Chronicles 6:30 says, "You, you only, know the hearts of the children of mankind." Jeremiah 17:9-10 states, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? I the Lord search the heart and test the mind." Such knowledge is never attributed to an angel.

(2) The rational will is subject only to God and depends directly on Him; only He can work on it. For instance, Proverbs 21:1 says, "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will." Psalm 33:15 reads, "He who fashions the hearts of them all." When angels discern a person's will and intention, it does not result from an immediate vision but rather from observing all circumstances and manifestations of movements. They deduce the probability that a person thinks and wills something, but there remains a fallibility in their judgments. One must always distinguish between the will itself and the knowledge of that will. They know the latter, and from it, they infer the former. God does reveal certain things that will happen to both good and evil angels for the benefit of the godly or for the testing and punishment of the wicked. Angels use these revelations for comfort and awakening. However, demons use them to deceive, to make people believe they can predict future events, and to deceive humans.

How they know.

Our children, as they begin to reason, ask many questions: Why is that so? And how is that? And when it comes to these matters, they ask: Does an angel have eyes? No. How can they then see? How can they read the Bible and know what it contains and what is happening in the world? Do they have ears? No. How can they hear what we

say? Do they have hands and feet? No. How can they move from one place to another? How can they do anything? We answer that we know the fact from God's Word, but because their form is unknown to us, we also do not know how. One should not deny a fact because one does not understand the how. We can only say that they do not see, hear, and work in the same way as a human does, but in a manner consistent with their nature.

They have power.

VII. Angels possess exceedingly great power to accomplish mighty deeds, far surpassing that of humans. 2 Peter 2:11 says, "whereas angels, though greater in might and power." They are referred to as mighty ones in Psalm 103:20. "Angels of power" in 2 Thessalonians 1:7. Armies in Luke 2:13. Chariots and horses in 2 Kings 6:17. This is evident from their deeds recorded in God's Word.

Working on bodies.

Here is a question: Is it truly possible, and does it indeed happen, that an angel can work on a body? Since there is no proportion and correspondence between the two. Answer. If there is no proportion between the two, then we must establish that both angels and humans exist. I respond to this matter:

1. It is not impossible. If it were impossible, it would have to be impossible either on the side of God, or a body, or an angel. Not on God's side, for He is omnipotent and can grant a creature such power as He wills. Not on the side of a body, as it can receive motion. Not on the side of an angel, for God's Word and experience testify otherwise. But no one can say how it is possible, unless they perfectly understand the nature or form of an angel, which humans do not. Poor mortals! How can they

presume to challenge the power of an angel when they can hardly explain how one body affects another? What am I saying, hardly? They do not understand it in many respects and cannot explain how the sun, moon, and stars influence terrestrial things, or the origin of tides, and many other such things. Tell us these things first, and teach us how our soul is united to our body and acts upon it, and then proceed to what angels can or cannot do. Or believe the Word of God and the foolish teacher: experience.

2. God works on bodies. It is certain that God, who is a Spirit and even more distinct from a body than an angel, works on bodies. So, it does not hinder an angel from working on a body because he is a spirit. If someone says, "God is almighty, and an angel is not, so one cannot draw conclusions from one to the other." I reply, "That is true concerning omnipotence, but what is common between God and an angel is that neither of them has proportion or correspondence with a body. Consequently, the lack of proportion and correspondence does not hinder a spirit from acting on a body. Thus, the entire foundation of the argument collapses, and with it, all reason for denial."
3. The soul works on bodies. Our soul is a spirit and, as such, is as distinct from a body as an angel. Now, our soul works on a body; therefore, an angel can do the same. If someone argues that a soul is united to its own body and works on other bodies through its own body, I answer, whether it is one's own or another, it does not matter. The soul is still a spirit, and as a spirit, it works directly on the body. No matter how many intervening means you introduce, you must eventually come to the closest one that touches the soul in the union. Thus, a spirit works on a body. Again, is it not within God's power to give an

angel a body or lend it for a time? And if that angel had such a body, could they not work on it, just as a soul works on its body, and through its body, on other bodies? Indeed, just as the soul does. Therefore, without any reason for objection remaining, it is certain that an angel can work on a body.

4. Texts. That angels work on bodies is abundantly clear from the Word of God, just reading it is enough evidence. Among a great number of Scripture passages, let's take this as an example: Isaiah 37:36, "Then the angel of the Lord went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians." The one who did the work was an angel; no other creature was capable of such a great work. The recipients of this work were human beings, specifically their bodies, and they were killed by the angel. Was that working on bodies or not? Daniel 6:23, "My God has sent his angel, and he has shut the lions' mouths." Did not an angel of the Lord, in heavenly glory, speak to the shepherds in human language, proclaiming the birth of Christ? Luke 2:13. Speaking is done through the movement of air; in this manner, the angel worked, along with the multitude of heavenly hosts, on bodies. An angel spoke with the Lord Jesus Christ in Gethsemane, Luke 22:43. Angels appeared at the resurrection of Christ, before the guards, and before the women, Matthew 28:2-5. An angel of the Lord stood by Peter in prison, and a light shone in the cell; the angel struck Peter on the side, waking him up, saying, Acts 12:7. Can one express a more powerful influence of a spirit on a body? And immediately, an angel of the Lord struck him (Herod), verse 23. From all these instances, it is indisputable that angels work on bodies.

VIII. Objection 1.

The angels did not do it; they were merely assistants to glorify God's work. I answer: Where does it state that anywhere? And even if they appeared to humans in bodily form to glorify themselves, they still worked in the appearance on bodies. But aside from that, there are explicit words that state that the angels did it. Who dares to say no when God says yes?

Objection 2.

One might wonder how angels work on bodies, whether they do it solely through their will or whether there is also power and action involved apart from their will? I answer:

(a) The will is the operative principle of a rational creature, but to accomplish something solely through the will is the work of God, not creatures. God says, "I will it; be cleansed," Luke 5:13. He calls things that are not as though they were, Romans 4:17. He speaks, and it is done; He commands, and it stands firm, Psalm 33:9.

(b) Throughout the Bible, it is not stated that angels accomplished things solely through their will; who dares to say otherwise? What basis is there for such a claim?

(c) God's Word says they are mighty heroes and possess strength, and it records that they struck dead, struck Peter's side, shut lions' mouths, spoke, and did everything as one would describe the actions of a human; this indicates that their will is accompanied by active power.

(d) If one argues that angels accomplish the work through their will alone, they are implicitly denying that angels truly work on bodies. Such a statement would be unable to counter those who deny the actual working but would rather affirm the desire to contradict.

However, since they do truly and actually work on bodies, they are not only occupied with willing but also infuse power and action. As for the "how," we are content to pause. It should be noted that in quibbling and evading, there lies a disposition to deny all spiritual realities.

They also work on each other.

IX. Just as the angels work on bodies, they also work on and with each other because:

(1) The diversity of nature among them does not hinder this.

(2) The Scripture attests to it, Isaiah 6:3, "One called to another."

(3) If not, they would each be alone, and they would be less perfect than humans, whose well-being also involves seeing, hearing, speaking to, and working with one another. This applies to angels, both good and evil, in general.

Concerning the Good Angels.

X. The angels were all created holy in the beginning, but a significant portion of them have fallen, so there are now holy angels and devils.

The good angels are also called:

- Chosen ones, 1 Timothy 5:21, indicating that there is both an election of angels and of humans.
- They are generally referred to as holy angels, Matthew 25:31.
- Jude 1:14, angels of the Lord or simply angels without any additional description.
- Also, serving spirits.
- Cherubim, due to their visible appearances to humans.

- Seraphim, burning, due to their zeal and swiftness.
- Holy guardians.
- Sons of God.
- Morning stars.
- Heavenly hosts.
- Thrones.
- Principalities.
- Authorities.
- Powers, due to their ministry.
- At one point, they are called Elohim, Psalm 8:6, which the apostle translates as angels in Hebrews 2:7, because of their reflection of God's power.

Residence.

XI. The dwelling place of the angels is the third heaven.

Matthew 18:10, "Their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father." Matthew 22:30, "They are like angels of God in heaven." Therefore, they are called angels of heaven, Matthew 24:36. From there, they are sent to the earth to carry out the things they are commanded to do. Matthew 28:2, "An angel of the Lord descended from heaven." Luke 22:43, "An angel from heaven appeared to Him."

Order.

Among the angels, there is very good order because God is a God of order. Thus, in heaven, where everything is holy, there is no disorder. However, the specific nature of this order and the rank of each angel are unknown to us. We only know that there are thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers. The hierarchies or orders proposed by some are mere speculations.

Office and Work.

XII. Their work in general is to carry out God's commands. Psalm 103:20, "Bless the Lord, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word, heeding the voice of His word."

Specifically, God sends them for the service of the elect, Hebrews 1:14.

- They guard them: Psalm 91:11-12, "For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone."
- They warn them of danger: Matthew 2:13.
- They rebuke them for sins committed: Revelation 22:9.
- They exhort them: Revelation 19:10.
- They instruct them in what they ought to do: Acts 10:5.
- They reveal future events to them: Daniel 8:16.
- They carry their souls to heaven after death: Luke 16:22.
- They will be used in gathering them for judgment: Matthew 24:31.
- God employs them for these and many other specific purposes for the benefit of the elect.

On the other hand, God uses them for the punishment of the wicked. An angel struck down 185,000 men in one night, Isaiah 37:36. An angel struck King Herod, and he died, Acts 12:23.

Someone may ask whether every country, city, house, and individual has their own particular angel? We answer that the Word of God says nothing about this, and one should not be wise beyond what is written. Scripture says that sometimes an angel is with a godly person, Acts 12:7. Sometimes there are more angels with a godly

person, 2 Kings 6:17. Sometimes an angel is with various godly individuals, Daniel 3:25.

How to Behave Toward Them.

XIII. If angels are so active concerning humans, then the godly should believe in this, acknowledge it, and behave rightly in this regard because their actions are not described in vain for us.

Do Not Worship.

1. One must be careful not to attribute to them or add to them anything that is not revealed in God's Word and that is forbidden to us. Specifically, we should not recognize them as intercessors or desire them to pray for us because that is not in accordance with God's Word, the rule of our conduct. We must not serve or worship them because:

(a) It is idolatry to serve something that is not God by nature, Galatians 4:8. We must serve and worship God alone. Matthew 4:10, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve."

(b) It is explicitly forbidden. Colossians 2:18, "Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels."

(c) It is severely punished. Revelation 19:10, "See that you do not do that.... Worship God."

Recognize That God Uses Them.

2. With careful observation, one must acknowledge and increase belief through contemplation that God accomplishes so much through them as instruments. Just as one should marvel at the interconnection of secondary causes and God's governance of them, both in terms of the influences of the sun, moon, and stars on earthly things, as well as the interactions of earthly bodies with each other, and perceive the wisdom and goodness of God in them, one should also marvel at God's use of angels. While we may not know everything, we can deduce many other things from what is written, and we would gain more knowledge if we were more engaged in observation. We would become more capable of recognizing and praising God for His wisdom and goodness in using angels with joy and gratitude.

Do Not Offend the Godly.

3. One must be cautious and fear offending, despising, or grieving the godly, for they have such holy guardians and caretakers who take no pleasure in those who offend them and are ready to punish their offenders, as they have shown: Isaiah 37:36, Acts 12:23. Therefore, the Lord Jesus says in Matthew 18:10, "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven."

They Are for Our Protection.

4. How secure are the children of God! It is true that God alone, through His power and oversight, protects and preserves His own, and thus we should not place our trust and reliance on any creature. However, God employs means in this preservation: food sustains life, soldiers protect lands and cities, and we should acknowledge these means when God provides them.

Similarly, we should wonder and rejoice in God's providence through the holy angels, recognizing that God uses such glorious creatures to safeguard even the smallest and humblest of human beings. Since they, under God's command, watch over, protect, and preserve the godly, we can remain calm and fearless, even when circumstances seem to be against us. For those who are with us are more than those who are against us, as seen in 2 Kings 6:16.

Behave Holily in Their Presence.

5. Through consideration of their presence, one should conduct themselves in a holy and proper manner, even when out of the sight of other people. While God's presence and omniscience alone should be our fear, God uses the presence of others as a means to keep us from many sins and to encourage us to practice virtues. In this way, we should also conduct ourselves in the presence of the angels, who are our fellow servants and companions, in a holy and fitting manner. Hebrews 12:22 encourages us to behave in such a way that we bring joy to them, and through their proclamation, there is joy in heaven, as stated in Luke 15:7, 10. Therefore, the apostle exhorts in 1 Corinthians 11:10, "For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels."

Of the Devils.

Devils are angels who have sinned.

XIV. God created all angels holy, but a great multitude has fallen away from God. 2 Peter 2:4, "For if God did not spare the angels who

sinned." Jude 1:6, "And the angels who did not keep their proper domain." They are called angels because of their nature, which they have corrupted but not lost due to their sins, sometimes without any qualification:

- Romans 8:38-39, "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers..." Sometimes with descriptions related to their sin, such as "those who sinned" or "those who did not keep their beginning," or with reference to their leader, Beelzebub, Matthew 12:24. "The angel of the bottomless pit," Revelation 9:11. Thus, they are called angels of the devil, Matthew 25:41, of the dragon, Revelation 12:7, and of Satan, 2 Corinthians 12:7.
- Due to their nature, they are also called spirits, as in Matthew 8:16, "And He cast out the spirits with a word." Because of their wickedness, they are called unclean spirits, Mark 3:11, Luke 4:33, and spiritual wickedness, Ephesians 6:12.
- In Hebrew, the devil is called "Satan," which means adversary or opponent because he opposes God, Christ, believers, and all that is good. 2 Corinthians 12:7, "A messenger of Satan." Revelation 12:9, "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan."
- In Greek, he is called "Antidikos," meaning adversary, in 1 Peter 5:8. In Greek, he is also called "Daimonion" or "Daimonin," which comes from "daioo," meaning to know because he leaves no stone unturned in his quest to know where and how he can do the most evil. He is also aware of many things hidden from humans, which he sometimes reveals with God's permission and sometimes guesses based on probabilities. He is cunning in all his wicked actions, as seen in Ephesians 6:11, "That you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." 2 Corinthians 11:3, "As the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness."

- He is also called "Diabolos," Devil, derived from "diaballein," meaning to slander. The Devil is a slanderer; he slanders God when he hurls fiery darts at believers, and he accuses believers before God, as seen in Job 1:9, 11 and Job 2:3. "Though you have incited Me against him."

Therefore, the translation of the words Satan, devil, unclean spirit, angels who sinned, into references to sin, illness, bad humors, imagination, and evil people is absurd. Both the Bible and all Hebrew, Greek, and Latin writers, as well as all writers in other languages, contradict such a tangible folly. When these words appear, we know that they do not refer to these things but to evil spiritual beings. They are translated into those things. Mark 3:15, "And to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons."

Devils are attributed with knowledge and knowledge of Christ, reasoning, and speech, as abundantly evident in what follows, which cannot be said of these other things. Only the Lord Jesus called Peter a Satan, an adversary, in Matthew 16:23 because he opposed Him and was doing the work of Satan. And Judas, the betrayer, is called a Diabolos, a devil, in John 6:70 because the devil would enter him, and he would be an instrument of the devil.

A Large Number of Devils.

XV. The existence of devils is so evident to both pagans and Christians, to the godly as well as the wicked. The Scriptures speak so often and clearly of them that no one can doubt it unless they stubbornly oppose all people and God's Word. Such a person would render themselves unworthy of any response or consideration.

There are devils, and there is a great multitude of them. The Scriptures frequently speak of devils, sometimes adding "many," as

in Mark 1:34, and sometimes "seven," as in Mark 16:9. They are also referred to as a "legion," even within a single person, as in Mark 5:9, 15. When we read "devil" in the singular, it may indicate that only one was present, or it may refer to the species as a whole, similar to saying, "Man lives by food and drink." It may also refer to the chief of the devils.

Everything said about angels in general applies to devils since they are angels, namely, that they are beings with substance, possess understanding and power, and work on bodies and humans. Their substance is evident from all the passages that testify to their ability to speak, recognize Jesus, tempt, tear, throw, kill pigs, and more. Their understanding is demonstrated, among other things, in Mark 1:34, where it is said, "He did not allow the demons to speak because they knew Him." In Acts 19:15, a demon responds, saying, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know." In 2 Corinthians 11:3, the apostle Paul expresses concern about believers being deceived, just as Eve was deceived by the serpent.

Working on Bodies.

XVI. That devils can and do work on bodies and humans is evident:

Proof 1.

From all the passages we presented earlier about angels doing so, and since devils are angels, it follows that they can. Furthermore, there are many other passages that illustrate this point. For example, in Genesis 3:1, 6, the serpent spoke to the woman, and in verse 13, the woman said, "The serpent deceived me." Clearly, a crawling creature named a serpent had no understanding or speech, so it was merely an instrument used by another. Additionally, holy Eve was not subject to illness, melancholy, vain imagination, or any sin. It

was not a waking dream but a true historical event. Moreover, Eve, due to her holiness, could not have entertained evil thoughts from God in her imagination, argued against them, and ultimately been overcome by them. So, who spoke to Eve? The text says it was the serpent to whom it was said that the seed of the woman would crush his head, referring to the one whom the Lord Jesus Christ would overcome, who is now known as the devil. Hebrews 2:14 states, "that through death He (Christ) might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." Therefore, the devil spoke to Eve, deceived her, and still lives, opposing the Church of God, as stated in 2 Corinthians 11:13, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ."

The Lord Jesus clearly affirms that the devil was a murderer from the beginning and has not stood in the truth. Devils were indeed in the truth but sinned, not holding their beginning. This is the murderer of humanity, known as the old serpent, the devil, and Satan (Revelation 12:9). From all this, it is undeniable that the devil knew and spoke to Eve and could thus influence a person.

Proof 2.

This is also evident from Job 1:12, where the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power." Satan then left the presence of the Lord. In verse 19, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, causing the death of Job's children. Job 2:7 records that Satan again left the presence of the Lord and struck Job with painful sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. Here, there was neither illness, nor bad humor, nor sin, nor human involvement. Instead, it was Satan who did it all. Satan, or the devil (they are one), brought the wind from the wilderness, toppled the house, killed Job's children,

and afflicted Job with painful sores. Thus, the devil works on people and bodies, even though he is a spirit.

Proof 3.

Consider Matthew 4:1-11, where Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. This entire account, including the dialogues, temptations, defenses, and displays of glory, is not a product of imagination but a true historical event. The one performing these actions was neither in a state of illness, sin, insanity, nor was it a human. None of these things, apart from being devils, apply here. The Lord Jesus was holy, and therefore, He could not tempt Himself or imagine all these things, argue against His own imagination, and overcome temptation. It was not God either, for God does not tempt anyone (James 1:13). The text explicitly states that it was the devil, Satan, who tempted Jesus. Thus, the devil works on humans and bodies, even though he is a spirit.

Proof 4.

Consider all the accounts of demon-possessed individuals in the Gospels. They are consistently referred to as "devils," "spirits," "evil spirits," but never as "illness," "sin," "madness," "imagination," or "humor." These individuals were said to recognize Jesus, which was something known to very few of Christ's disciples, and they feared being tormented before their time. They requested to enter the swine, did so upon receiving permission, and subsequently caused the pigs' deaths. They tore and threw the bodies of the possessed individuals. All these details are well-known truths. The expulsions performed by Jesus were miracles that demonstrated His role as Mediator. An angel of Satan struck Paul with fists (2 Corinthians 12:7). Though he does not have fists of his own, he can use a body if God permits it. All of these examples make it abundantly clear that

devils exist on Earth and can exert their influence on people and bodies.

Proof 5.

Devils are constantly active alongside humans, especially in the presence of the godly, as is evident from the exhortations urging us to stand firm against the devil: Ephesians 6:11, "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." 1 Peter 5:8, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion."

The methods of their attacks are diverse, but they can be categorized into three main types:

(a) Sometimes, they affect the five senses of humans, either by obstructing them while simultaneously influencing the imagination, causing the person to believe that they have truly seen those things, or by manifesting themselves physically, making themselves visible and audible to humans.

(b) Sometimes, they work solely on the imagination, whether a person is awake or dreaming, in the light or darkness.

(c) Sometimes, they operate by appealing to the soul, which becomes more evident when they present non-physical matters and arguments to the soul.

XVII. Thus, we have seen that devils exist in the world, interact with humans, and engage in various activities. When devils accomplish their wickedness through people who willingly surrender to the devil or are otherwise willing to serve as instruments, it is referred to as divination and sorcery.

- Divination occurs when a person, with the devil's assistance, reveals present matters hidden from humans but known to the devil, or predicts future events that the devil can deduce from natural occurrences or guess, or that God may have revealed to him.
- Sorcery involves a person performing extraordinary deeds beyond human capabilities with the aid of the devil, such as making the appearance of the deceased or afflicting people physically. That he can and does perform such deeds is evident from numerous passages in Holy Scripture. For example, Leviticus 20:6 states, "And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people." Verse 27 continues, "A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death." Exodus 7:11 records that the Egyptian magicians used their enchantments. Exodus 22:18 commands, "You shall not permit a sorceress to live." The witch at Endor brought forth the form of Samuel and foretold Saul's death (1 Samuel 28:9-19). We also read about Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9) and Elymas the sorcerer (Acts 13:6-8). While we may not delve into the specific methods the devil and people use, we know from God's Word that sorcerers exist and have performed extraordinary feats. Experience confirms this sufficiently, even though we acknowledge that many of these stories and accounts are merely fables and fabrications.

Utility

XVIII. Knowing all these things is not enough; we have explained them in detail so that they may be beneficial to us. The devil is a prince of darkness and typically desires to remain unknown and

hidden, as this is when he can do the most harm. Those who help him remain concealed do him a great service. There is utility in this doctrine for both the unconverted and the converted, for he works upon both.

Warning.

I address all the unconverted first and tell you that, as long as you remain unconverted, you are under the power of the devil. You have the devil as your father (John 8:44). You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. The devil is your lord and master, and he works within you (Ephesians 2:2). You are held captive by his snares (2 Timothy 2:26), and you are ensnared by his will. He often leads you to commit deeds you never thought you would. Just as he tempted Judas to betray the Lord Jesus and then to the gallows. The devil often keeps you away from the church, especially when he knows that something might be preached that could serve as a means of your conversion. During preaching, he seeks to distract you with other thoughts and presents matters to you in such a way that aligns with your desires to make you more easily distracted by those things. When you hear something that strikes you, he seeks in every way to take it away from you (Matthew 13:19). The devil hinders you from grasping the power of the Gospel (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4). However, even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

Not that this makes you innocent, for you are also blind, and wicked enough for it, and it is by your own will. However, the devil often provides occasions for this, urges you on, and you willingly obey him.

Consider this calmly and apply it to yourself: I am a slave of the devil; he is my lord and master, he controls me, puts me to work in his service, and he will soon take me as prey to hell, where I will be eternally tormented. What a dreadful state it is to be under such a gruesome tyrant, an arch-enemy of God, of Christ, and even of yourself, who, out of bitter hatred, murders your soul and forever separates you from God and the blessed Christ! I implore you, have mercy on your soul, wake up, hate the devil and his work, flee from him, leave his realm, and enter the sweet, gentle, lovely, and eternally blessed rule of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, that you would heed my words! May the Lord save you!

Exhortation.

According to God's declaration in Genesis 3:15, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed," there is a special hatred between the devil and the believers, the members of the Lord Jesus Christ. The devil's hatred is as bitter and wicked as can be; he lacks only the power to carry out his wickedness, as it is constantly thwarted by God. I wish I could make the hatred of the believers against the devil more vivid and sharper so that they might be more careful not to be deceived by his cunning devices or to be willing in him elsewhere. Thus, out of bitter hatred and aversion to the evil enemy of our beloved Lord Jesus, they may be courageous and fight against his attacks (1 Peter 5:9), "Resist him, steadfast in the faith."

Chapter 10

On the Providence of God

Having observed the creation of all things in general, and of angels and humans in particular, we now proceed to the Providence of God over all His creatures. By this, we do not mean just God's foreknowledge or His unchanging plan for all things, as discussed in Chapter 5. Instead, we mean the execution of that plan, His active care and arrangement. Look to Genesis 22:8, where it is written, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering."

- Providence is also referred to as ordination, as in Psalm 119:91.
- It is God's way, as in Psalm 77:14.
- God's hand, as mentioned in Acts 4:28.
- God's sustaining, as in Hebrews 1:3.
- God's working, as in Ephesians 1:11.
- God's rule, as in Psalm 93:1.
- God's care, as in 1 Peter 5:7.

Description: II. The Catechism clearly and piously describes Providence as follows: "The almighty and omnipresent power of God, by which He still upholds heaven and earth, as well as all creatures, as though by His hand, and so governs them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and unfruitful years, food and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, and all things, not by chance, but by His fatherly hand, come to us. Therefore, we must be patient in all adversity, thankful in prosperity, and have a good confidence in our faithful God and Father, that no creature shall separate us from His love since all creatures are so in His hand that they cannot move or act against His will."

It is a Divine Power:

It is God's power, not only because Providence is executed by the Almighty but also concerning the exercise of that power outwardly in

His creatures. Thus, it is emphasized in Mark 5:30, "Jesus, knowing... the power that had gone out of Him."

Almighty:

It is an Almighty power. When we consider the magnitude of the universe, the countless creatures, the unimaginable diversity of their nature, form, existence, and persistence of each thing in its essence or nature, all movements of creatures, both living and rational, as well as lifeless, the intricate order of each thing in its motion, and how one thing sets another in motion and advances it, we will be lost in amazement at the infinity of God's power and wisdom by which all is sustained and governed. Through this power, God accomplishes all that He wills irresistibly, and no one can hinder it. As Isaiah 14:27 says, "For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?" Isaiah 46:10 adds, "My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all My purpose."

Omni-Presence:

It is the omnipresent power of God. Not only in relation to the omnipresent Being of God but also concerning the outgoing power within creatures. God's power not only flows in a general sense into everything, not only touches the first underlying causes, which then further generate and work out the movement and action in other underlying causes. Instead, that power permeates the existence of every creature, passing through underlying causes to the ultimate consequence, and touches it directly concerning that power. Thus, there is nothing, and nothing moves without God's power being in it and manifesting in it. If only we had clear vision, we would see it in everything.

The Existence of God's Providence:

III. The existence of God's providence in all things is so evident in both nature and Scripture that anyone who denies it can be considered nothing better than an atheist or, at best, a blind mole.

1. From Nature: See this in nature; it will tell you, as Job's testimony confirms in Job 12:7-9. "But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish in the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this?"

(a) Examine every object that you encounter from every angle until you perceive the almighty and omnipresent power of God within it. Each thing declares that it does not possess its essence and existence by itself, that it is created by God, and therefore, it can no more exist by itself than it can create itself, as both require the same power. If it were independent of God, it would stand and act by itself, alongside God.

(b) Observe the entire order present in the universe—how each entity has its role and does its work without interfering with others, how they all cooperate. There is no confusion among creatures of various natures and motions. Lifeless creatures remain orderly in their movements, and this is done without their knowledge. Consider how precisely the sun, moon, and stars follow their orbits, their rising and setting times, and how tides rise and fall on schedule. Birds know when to come and go; every flower knows when to bloom. All types of creatures persist, either in their essence or in their nature through procreation, so that not one has been missing since the creation of the world until now, as Isaiah 40:26 says, "Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, who brings out their host by

number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing."

(c) Pay attention to the rise and fall of kingdoms, the outcomes of wars, unexpected events with significant consequences, prophecies and their fulfillments, as well as the extraordinary plagues upon particular wicked individuals, unexpected outcomes for the godly, answers to their prayers, and all the marvelous ways by which various matters are carried out in nature and grace. Anyone who cannot see God's hand in all these is truly blind.

(d) Consider the common sense and acknowledgment of all people in whose hearts this knowledge of God is impressed. Although the degree of recognition through observation may vary among individuals, and while some may strive to become atheists and deny everything, this knowledge still resides in their hearts and cannot be completely erased. Those who are as senseless as Nebuchadnezzar when it comes to recognizing God's providence in all these matters, we hope they may regain their senses, so that, like him, they can say: Daniel 4:35, "All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'"

(e) Indeed, one who acknowledges a deity must also acknowledge His providence, for one establishes the other.

2. From the Scripture:

Just as God's providence is evident in nature, Holy Scripture abundantly demonstrates it, to the extent that no one who regards the Bible as God's Word has ever dared to deny it. However, some twist and distort the Scripture in such a way that they hold onto the words while undermining the very essence of the matter. In the following sections, many verses will arise; consider Ephesians 1:11 alone, which says, "He works all things according to the counsel of His will." Even the most senseless person would dare to claim that he could govern the world much wiser and better than it is currently administered. He might not let it rain in the sea because there is already enough water there. He wouldn't tolerate so many mountains, rocky places, and barren lands. He would treat the good favorably and the wicked with severity. Poor soul! He would plummet from the sky as quickly as Icarus and Phaëton and turn everything upside down. God does nothing in vain; in every work of God, there is unfathomable wisdom, and each serves a wondrously useful purpose. The angels see it and glorify God for it. The enlightened observe it wisely, believe everything from the beginning, and investigate it thoroughly. A fool finds everything too lofty. The ways of the Lord are just, and the righteous will walk in them, but transgressors will stumble in them, Hosea 14:9. Look at the sin in the world, and you'll find your answer.

IV. The acts of God's providence can be categorized into these three:

1. Preservation.
2. Cooperation.
3. Governance.
4. Preservation:

Preservation is God's immediate inflow of power, by which all creatures, in general, and each little creature, in particular, are preserved in their existence. God sustains living creatures not only by providing them with their ordained food and drink, but God also infuses an immediate sustaining power into each of them, without which the nourishment would be in vain. This is evident in Acts 17:28, which states, "In Him, we live and move and have our being." Colossians 1:17 affirms, "All things consist together through Him." Hebrews 1:3 adds, "He upholds all things by the word of His power."

Happens either without or through means.

V. If this sustaining immediate influence were to cease for but a moment, the creature would vanish into nothingness in an instant, for no creature can exist independently of God, and the term "creature" implies this. Job 6:9 states, "If He withdraws His hand, it is finished with me." Psalm 104:29 adds, "When You hide Your face, they are troubled; when You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust." God has created some creatures in such a way that, apart from this inflowing sustaining power, they need no other means for their existence. Others He has created in a manner where they require other means, such as earthly things. Among these, there is a complex interconnection of subordinate causes, where the lower causes repeatedly use means provided by the higher ones, and, in turn, become causes for those beneath them. Hosea 2:20, 21 illustrates this: "I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth. And the earth shall hear the grain... and they shall hear Jezreel." God has ordained food and drink for the sustenance of living creatures, and He Himself arranges for it. Psalm 36:7 mentions, "You preserve man and beast." Psalm 147:9 states, "He gives to the beast its food, and to the young ravens that cry."

God does not need these means, nor can these means sustain a creature without His sustaining influence. Instead, God employs them to demonstrate His wisdom, power, and goodness so that intelligent creatures may better perceive His hand, rejoice in it, and glorify God for it.

Whether ordinary or extraordinary.

VI. God ordinarily employs means, but at times, God acts extraordinarily to display His supreme authority and freedom. a. Sometimes, He sustains something through otherwise insufficient means. For example, God sustained Elijah, the widow, and her son for an extended period with only a small amount of meal and oil, as seen in 1 Kings 17:10, and so too, the Lord Jesus fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish, as mentioned in John 6:9, 10. b. God has also sustained some individuals for a period without food and drink, such as Moses, Elijah, and Christ, each for forty days. Exodus 34:28, 1 Kings 19:8, and Matthew 4:2 attest to this. c. God has sustained some by inhibiting the natural workings of their environment. For instance, God preserved the three young men in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:17) and delivered Israel from Egypt by parting the waters of the Red Sea, making them stand like walls on either side until the Israelites had safely crossed on dry land (Exodus 14:22). Similar events occurred at the Jordan River (Joshua 3:16). The Lord made the sun stand still (Joshua 10:13) and caused it to go backward ten degrees (2 Kings 20:11).

3. Cooperation

VII. The second act of Providence is cooperation, "concursum," the convergence of God's power with creatures in their motion. Creatures have received from God their own independent existence, and thus, their own motion. They move; humans walk, speak, work—

they do these things themselves. But just as every creature exists by the inflowing sustaining power of God and would not exist without it, every creature also operates by the influence of God's cooperating power, without which it would not move. For whatever a thing is in existence, it is the same in its motion; both existence and motion are dependent on God.

In a sustaining, preceding, and subsequent power.

By the cooperation of God, we do not mean:

(a) The inflowing power of God sustaining everything in its essence and capabilities, stopping there, and leaving further movement and direction to the creature. Instead, it is a sustaining, preceding, and subsequent power that flows into the moving creature, influencing both the creature and its motion.

(b) We do not mean a general, ordinary, indistinct, or uniform influence that would not determine how a creature acts now, here, or in any particular way, but would be determined by the creature, flowing in only where and as it pleases. For example, the sun works with a uniform influence on earthly things, affecting plant growth, the reproduction of animals and humans, a foul odor, and a fragrant flower. While the objects and effects differ, the working influence remains the same.

(c) We do not mean a persuading or dissuading influence, presenting opportunities or removing them. Instead, we refer to a physical, one might say, natural, immediate, and powerfully effective influence causing the creature to move.

(d) Cooperation is not mediated, like a craftsman working through tools or the moon receiving light from the sun and illuminating

earthly things. Rather, it is immediate. God flows into moving creatures through His own power and His very being, penetrating not only to the first subordinate cause next to Him but also touching the effect in relation to Him immediately. Although creatures are considered means in God's hands in relation to one another, the cooperation itself is immediate.

(e) Nor should one conceive of cooperation as if God were moving alongside or beside the creature's action, like two horses pulling a cart. This would suggest that the creature works independently through a capability given by God in its nature, with God merely joining the action of the moving creature, both operating independently with separate powers. Instead, God goes before the creature before it moves, determining it for a particular object, place, and time. Having thus preempted and determined the creature, God continues to work in the creature and its motion, thus achieving His intended purpose.

So, by the cooperation of God, we understand that God not only sustains everything in His being and capabilities with His omnipotent and omnipresent power, but also, with a special, physical, natural, immediate, and directly touching operation, precedes each creature concerning its motion. He determines and sets it in motion before it moves, sustains it in that motion, and penetrates into all secondary causes and their motion, right up to the final effect.

VIII. The Socinians, Roman Catholics, and Remonstrants deny this; therefore, we must demonstrate it more clearly. The truth of this is evident both from Scripture and nature.

1. From Scripture. It is evident throughout the Scriptures, the entire Bible. See Acts 17:28. A clear distinction is made between

the being of the creature and its movements, and it is established that the creature moves in God just as it exists in God. To move in God is to work through the influence of God's power. Also, consider Psalm 139:13, 14: "For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Job 10:10, 11: "Did you not pour me out like milk and curdle me like cheese? You clothed me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews." See also Proverbs 21:1: "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will." Just as streams of water have their flow, but God controls where they go, the heart of the king, no matter how high above his subjects, is not independent of God. The king may have his own intentions, but the Lord inclines him to do what He wills. Add to this Isaiah 10:15: "Shall the axe boast over him who hews with it, or the saw magnify itself against him who wields it? As if a rod should wield him who lifts it, or as if a staff should lift him who is not wood!" Just as an axe, saw, and staff cannot move themselves but are moved by another, so, says the prophet, is every creature, every human. God moves them according to their nature through His cooperating influence. The Lord makes His sun rise, Matthew 5:45. The Lord fought against Sisera, causing the stars to move from their courses, Judges 5:20. David acknowledged this: "You equipped me with strength for the battle; you made those who rise against me sink under me," Psalm 18:40. Philippians 2:13: "For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

From Reasons.

IX. 2. It also becomes apparent from reason and nature itself.

(a) It is an undeniable rule: the manner of operation follows the manner of being. Now, in being, every creature depends on God; therefore, in their movements as well.

(b) Either humans are entirely independent of God, which is the most absurd notion, and it contradicts the very idea of being a creature not to depend on one's Maker, or if they are dependent, they are also dependent in every motion. For otherwise, they would be independent in that matter, and if they could be independent in one matter, they could be in others, and ultimately in everything, which goes against the nature of a creature.

(c) If God did not flow into the movement of every creature, there would be no need to pray, "Create in me a clean heart, O God," (Psalm 51:10) or "Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground," (Psalm 143:10) or "Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!" (Psalm 141:3). There would be no need to pray for victory in war or any other matter. But because we must pray, it is clear that God flows in with His cooperation. Then we would also have no reason to thank God when we receive a blessing, whether physical or spiritual, because if God did not do it, we could not thank Him. We would have to direct our thanks either to ourselves or to some other creature that had accomplished it.

(d) Then God would not be a Lord but a servant of the creature, just like the sun, which the person uses as they please and when they please. Thus, God would have to be ready with His universal influence whenever the creature determined it and would have to use His influence as the creature wished. It would not be a matter of God's will but rather the will of the human being. This contradicts James 4:15.

God is not the cause in such a way that all creatures would be passive. X. One might wonder whether such cooperation would lead to the idea that there is only one cause of all movements and actions. That God alone works and that humans and all creatures are merely passive, like the strings in a musical instrument that are entirely passive and moved solely by the player. But I reply: Not in the least; for even though creatures are means with respect to other creatures, which God uses to carry out His work and purpose, they are, nevertheless, first-causal agents of their motions and effects, not in relation to God, as if they were independent of Him, but in relation to other subordinate causes and the products of their actions. There is no absurdity in having two causes of different orders for the same effect, especially since it is one and the same effect produced in different ways by both.

To posit one cause, namely God, as the cause of all movements, actions, and effects, and to consider humans as entirely passive and not acting, stems from blindness and ignorance of God's power and wisdom. It is an error refuted by both Scripture and nature, as evidenced by:

1. From Legislation. Because God has given humans a law with promises and threats, man is not passive but himself a causal agent of his deeds. For God cannot establish a law for Himself, make promises to Himself, or threaten Himself. Since humans have been given a law of promise and threat to guide their actions, they must work themselves, conforming their actions to the promises and threats, in order to receive what has been promised or to avoid the threatened punishments.
2. From Punishment. If humans were entirely passive in their movements, they could not be punished, for punishment is an

act of justice in response to the violation of the law. If humans had done nothing and were merely passive objects of God's action, they would not have committed any wrong. Without wrongdoing, there could be no just grounds for punishment or condemnation.

3. Otherwise, God Would Be the Cause of Sin. If humans were entirely passive, and God alone the Worker of their movements and deeds, then all actions, both natural and sinful, would be performed by God and attributed to Him. It would be God who walked, talked, wrote, read, prayed, believed, or sinned, not humans. In this scenario, humans would not create idols, they would not use God's name in vain, they would not break the Sabbath, they would not disobey their parents, they would harbor no hatred, anger, or envy towards others, and so on. Humans would not hate God because they would be entirely passive, doing nothing, and all actions would be attributed to God. This idea would be the utmost impiety.
4. Man Is the Clear Cause of His Deeds. The Scripture plainly states that man walks, sees, hears, and speaks. It acknowledges that man believes, prays, and sins, making him justly liable for his transgressions. It is unnecessary to cite all these verses. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 3:9, "We are God's fellow workers." This is evident in Philippians 2:12-13, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." God is the efficient, causal cause of the work, while man is the formal, subjective cause, producing these deeds from within himself. Therefore, these actions must be attributed to man according to the rule that names are given from the formal cause. In Philippians 2:12-13, man is encouraged to work out his salvation, convicted and

exhorted to fulfill his duty, and simultaneously taught about his sinfulness and inability in the spiritual realm. He is warned not to entertain thoughts of his own good will or rely on his own strength to perform good deeds. On the other hand, he should not despair when he recognizes his weakness. Instead, he should be encouraged because God assists him, precedes him by moving in him, and works powerfully within him to grasp that strength and act accordingly.

Objection 1.

XI. Does such cooperation make God a cause of sin? I answer, by no means; for a distinction must be made between movement in itself—understood as understanding, willing, seeing, hearing, speaking, working—and the understanding of that movement as being in accordance with God's law. The movement in itself, as natural, is neither good nor bad; it is when accompanied by a law governing its object, manner, and timing that the movement becomes either good or bad. When we speak of God's cooperation, we refer to the movement in itself, as natural, but not in relation to the distortion of that movement, the deviation from the law, and thus not in relation to the evil within the movement. One may be the cause of the movement in another person without being the cause of any evil that might accompany it. The government is the cause that the executioner flogs a thief, but not of any cruelty he might commit in the process. A musician is the cause of the sound of the strings but not of the discordance of the sound, which arises from the string. A rider, urging his horse forward, is the cause of its progression but not of its limping, which is a defect in the horse. Similarly, here, the natural movement is from God, but man corrupts it due to his inner corruption. Therefore, not God but man is the cause of sin.

Objection 2.

Doesn't this preceding and determining cooperation of God take away the freedom of man's will? I answer: by no means; for the freedom of the will does not consist in indifference or the ability to act or not act in the same way but in the spontaneous, arising from one's own choice, pleasure, or inclination to do or not do something. God's cooperation causes man to act in accordance with his nature, which is by free choice. In this, God's cooperation and man's will correspond. God inclines the will, and man wills accordingly.

4. The Government.

XII. The third part of God's Providence is government, by which God directs all things in general and each thing in particular toward the ends determined by Him. That God governs and directs all things is taught throughout God's Word. See Psalm 93:1, "The Lord reigns." Ephesians 1:11, "Who works all things according to the counsel of His will." Isaiah 44:24, "I am the LORD, who makes all things."

In particular, all things can be grouped under four headings:

(1) Substances.

(2) Magnitude or smallness.

(3) Goodness or badness.

(4) The outcomes of affairs.

XIII. (1) The first category pertains to substances, which can be either living or non-living. a. Living substances are either intelligent or unintelligent. • Intelligent beings include angels and humans. God governs angels because they are sent to serve. Hebrews 1:14, "Are

they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?" God governs humans in all their actions. Proverbs 16:1, 9, "The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD. The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps." • Unintelligent creatures fall into two categories: those with sentient life and those with only vegetative life.

- The Lord governs everything with sentient life, such as birds. Matthew 6:26, "Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them." Animals, too, are governed by God. 2 Kings 17:25-26, "So the LORD sent lions among them, which killed some of them." God calls locusts, beetles, caterpillars, and worms "My great army, which I sent among you" (Joel 2:25). Even the fish in the sea are under God's control. John 21:6, "And he said to them, 'Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because of the quantity of fish."
- The Lord also governs all creatures with vegetative life, such as plants, trees, and herbs. Psalm 104:14, "You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth." b. The Lord governs all inanimate creatures: the sun, moon, stars, rain, hail, snow, thunder, lightning, wind, mountains and all their minerals, seas, and rivers. See Psalm 148; Psalm 29:3; Jeremiah 10:13 for more on this.

(2) Large and Small.

XIV. The second category pertains to things in terms of their size or smallness. Large things, no more than small ones, can govern

themselves, and therefore, they need God's governance. God governs even the smallest things down to the threads on clothes, shoes on feet, and hairs on the head. Matthew 10:30, "But even the hairs of your head are all numbered." Daniel 3:27, "And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed; their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them." Deuteronomy 29:5, "I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn off your feet."

(3) Good and Evil.

XV. The third category pertains to things in terms of their goodness or badness. All that is good in nature or grace comes from the Lord. James 1:17, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights."

Evil can be either the evil of punishment or the evil of sin. The evil of punishment is from God. God sends and directs the evil of punishment as a just Judge or loving Father. Lamentations 3:38, "Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come?" Amos 3:6, "Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid? Does disaster come to a city, unless the LORD has done it?"

The evil of sin is not from God because:

(a) He is holy (Isaiah 6:3), light (1 John 1:5), and a Rock whose work is perfect (Deuteronomy 32:4). God's ways are just; He is truth and has no injustice (Job 34:10). In Him, there is no unrighteousness (Psalm 92:15).

(b) God has forbidden evil and will punish it. Therefore, He is not the cause of sin. We declare this and testify to it wholeheartedly to the entire world. Thus, it is evident that it is slanderous to say that the Reformed Church teaches that God is the cause of sin.

Nevertheless, God governs regarding sin; otherwise, the entire human race would be exempt from God's governance because it sins in its deeds. That God governs concerning sin cannot be denied by anyone who believes in God's Word, from which we will clearly demonstrate this.

The Natural Movements Belong to God.

XVI. To understand God's governance concerning sin, one must consider three aspects of every sin:

1. The natural movement.
2. The disorder in that movement.
3. The guidance toward a good end.
4. Regarding the natural movement, in and of itself, it is from God, as shown in the second act of Providence, namely, cooperation.

That the guidance of sin (3) toward a good end is from God will be shown shortly.

2. Human Misuse. However, the disorder, the misuse of God's inflowing power, the corruption of it, and the irregularity in movement, both inwardly and outwardly, are not from God but from man himself. Nevertheless, in sinning, man is not independent because he distorts the influence upon which he depends for his movement.

XVII. God's governance alongside sin can be understood in three aspects:

(1) In the beginning,

(2) In the progress,

(3) In the end.

1. In the beginning, God permits sin to occur. Psalm 81:13, "Oh, that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways!" Acts 14:16, "In past generations, he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways." God allows sin, not in a way that He releases the sinner from the law by which they were bound, for then God would approve of sin and couldn't punish it. Instead, God does not prevent the sinner, even though He could and sometimes does. Genesis 20:6, "Then God said to him in the dream, 'Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her.'" This is not mere passive observation but active permission, not concerning the sin itself as the object but in the circumstances. It means that God does not compel the sinner's free will by forcing them to act against it. Even when God hinders the sinner and does not allow them to sin, as we have seen in the case of Abimelech, He does not take away free will. God acts upon the person according to their nature, allowing them to act according to their will. Active permission includes the following actions:

(a) God precedes, defines, and continues with His powerful influence in the person, their abilities, and their actions, enabling them to work and move.

(b) God allows opportunities to arise that the person would rightly use if they were perfect but, due to their corruption, they misuse. For example, David's desire was inflamed when he saw Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:2), or Ahab's anger flared up in response to the words of the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 21:20). Even desires are inflamed by the law (Romans 7:8).

(c) God justly and freely withholds new grace when the person encounters situations that may lead to sin, refusing to provide strength to resist sin, leaving them in their corrupt state, inclined to commit various sins (Jeremiah 16:13).

(d) By a just judgment for past sins, God may withdraw His restraining power that He previously exercised alongside the sinner, leaving them to themselves (2 Chronicles 32:31).

(e) By a righteous judgment, God may hand the sinner over to their own lusts, punishing sins with more sins (Romans 1:28, 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11, 2 Samuel 16:11).

(f) God may release the devil to exert all his powers on a person, driving them from one sin to another through their inflamed desires (1 Samuel 16:14, 1 Kings 22:22).

(g) God may harden the sinner's heart, rendering them unfeeling in their sin. God uses such terms and claims responsibility for it (Exodus 7:3, 13). This hardening is not an infusion of any evil or sinful disposition but a holy, concealed operation that withdraws misused gifts in an extraordinary manner, hiding Himself completely. In this state, the sinner is left with no impression or consciousness of God and their conscience. They are delivered into the grip of their raging passions and set upon by demons. In this condition, the sinner has no choice but to sin continually, and this

constant sinning further hardens them. Thus, what Exodus 7:3 attributes to God, Exodus 8:15 attributes to Pharaoh. So, God's governance alongside sin in the beginning is as described.

(2) In the progression determining sin.

XVIII. 2. God's governance also extends to the progression of sin. God sets limits, times, boundaries, no farther, no higher, no longer. We see this in the case of Laban: Genesis 31:29, "It is in my power to do you harm. But the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.'" Esau intended to kill Jacob, but he ended up embracing him (Genesis 33:4). Balaam sought to curse but had to bless repeatedly (Numbers 24). The devil wanted to destroy Job, but the Lord limited his actions (Job 1:12), "And the Lord said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.'" (Job 2:6) "And the Lord said to Satan, 'Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life.'"

(3) In the end: directing sin toward a good outcome.

XIX. 3. God's governance also extends to the end of sin, either to demonstrate His justice, grace, patience, or mercy, or for the benefit of His children, to humble them and make them wise. Genesis 50:20, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today." Isaiah 10:5, 6, 7, 12, "Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger; the staff in their hands is my fury! I will send him against an ungodly nation... Yet it does not so intend... But it is against a godly nation that I have command... So will I do to the house which is called by My name, and which you trust, and to the place which I gave you and your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh."

These outcomes do not arise from the nature of sin. God does not wait until after the sin is committed to decide on these outcomes. Rather, God, having predetermined to glorify Himself in this way and bestow such benefits upon His children, sanctifies human wickedness to achieve these purposes in a holy manner. Just as the sun is not polluted by its influence on a foul odor, God remains holy and works holily concerning sin in its beginning, progression, and end, while humans and demons commit sin. God uses sinners as executioners, lions, and bears, employing their rage to execute His judgments. Thus, He strikes with a crooked stick, achieving straight blows.

Providence governs outcomes.

XX. The fourth category of things over which God's Providence extends includes outcomes, which can be necessary or contingent (accidental), resulting from the free will of humans. This includes the outcome of war, marriage, and the day of death.

The Established Order.

1. Some outcomes are fixed and necessary, established by the law and order of nature, such as the movement of the sun, moon, stars, eclipses, tides, and the rising of fire and falling of heavy objects. God governs all these. See Psalm 104:19, 20, "He made the moon for the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting. You make darkness, and it is night when all the beasts of the forest creep about." Psalm 119:91, "By your appointment, they stand this day, for all things are your servants." However, God can prevent this fixed course and make it different from the natural order. For instance, the Lord caused the sun and moon to stand still at Joshua's request (Joshua 10:13) and made them go back ten degrees for Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:11). The Lord made iron float (2 Kings 6:6) and preserved the

three young men in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:25). Prophetic fulfillments are also sure and certain and cannot be altered by God or creatures (Matthew 26:54).

The Contingent.

2. Some outcomes are contingent, not from God's perspective, as nothing happens by chance since His counsel stands, and He does all His pleasure. However, they are contingent from the perspective of secondary causes, in that they might have turned out differently. They also relate to the connection or relationship between causes and their effects, which might not have been foreseen or controlled. Yet God governs all these contingent outcomes in a fixed and unpreventable execution of His will. This is evident in cases like manslaughter, where the Lord caused the slain to meet the slayer (Deuteronomy 19:5, Exodus 21:13).

What could be more contingent than casting lots? Nevertheless, God governs it and causes it to fall according to His will (Proverbs 16:33). This was evident in the case of Jonah (Jonah 1:7) and Jonathan (1 Samuel 14:42). What could be more contingent than a sparrow falling from the rooftop or a hair falling from one's head? Yet God governs even these (Matthew 10:29, 30). "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered."

Those done by the free will of man.

3. God also governs all actions done by the free will of man. God does not take away the freedom of the will or force a person to act against their will, but He inclines and directs it, whether through internal inclinations or external circumstances and opportunities, so that

people carry out those things which God has determined, according to their own choices and inclinations. We see this in:

- Psalm 33:15: "He fashions their hearts."
- Proverbs 16:1, 9: "The answer of the tongue is from the Lord... The Lord directs his steps."
- Proverbs 21:1: "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will."
- Philippians 2:13: "For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

Outcomes of war.

4. God also governs the outcomes of war, sending one people as a punishment for another or both. He does not always grant victory to the strongest in numbers, the wisest, or the bravest, but to whom He chooses.

- Deuteronomy 32:30: "How could one have chased a thousand, and two have put ten thousand to flight?"
- 2 Chronicles 14:11: "Lord, it is nothing with you to help, whether with many or with those who have no power."
- Psalm 33:16, 17: "The king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. The war horse is a false hope for salvation."

This applies to passages where God is said to deliver one people into the hand of another or to redeem them (Judges 3:8 and Judges 6:1).

Marriages.

5. God also governs marriages, bringing each person to their spouse. He joins some in anger as punishment for their sins, others for

chastisement, and some for mutual comfort in soul and body. The strange and remarkable events surrounding marriage are inscrutable, yet God directs it all according to His predetermined plan. Some marriages hold providential significance for as long as the world stands.

- Genesis 24:12-14: "O Lord, God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abraham... Behold, I am standing by the spring of water... Let the young woman to whom I shall say, 'Please let down your jar that I may drink,' and who shall say, 'Drink, and I will water your camels'—let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac."
- Proverbs 19:14: "House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord."
- Matthew 19:6: "What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

The day of death.

6. God determines everyone's age. They will not die earlier or live longer than He has decreed, and they will die in a specific place and manner as God has ordained. God provides sustenance and protection until the appointed time, and no doctor in the world can prolong a person's life even by an hour.

- Acts 17:26: "And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place."
- Job 14:5: "Since his days are determined, and the number of his months is with you, and you have appointed his limits that he cannot pass."

- Psalm 39:6: "Surely a man goes about as a shadow! Surely for nothing they are in turmoil; man heaps up wealth and does not know who will gather!"

Thus, we have seen that everything, without exception, is governed by God according to His decree. However, God generally accomplishes everything through means, and humanity is bound to those means. When these means are used properly, God usually blesses His ordinances. A godless farmer who diligently prepares his land typically reaps a bountiful harvest, while a godly one who neglects his work will see it go to waste. However, even when godly means are employed, God blesses them. If one refuses to use the means and yet desires a result, they are tempting God.

XXI. This teaching of God's Providence is of great benefit to those who use it wisely. The blind, natural, unconverted person cannot derive any benefit from it; they cannot find comfort anywhere in it. Even if they see, believe in, and seek to strengthen themselves through the Providence of God when facing particular adversity, they cannot. They endure patience by compulsion because they have no other choice. They sit down under a Stoic fate, believing that it had to be, and there's no way around it. They try to want what they can want, as they cannot want what they will. How can the unconverted find comfort in God's Providence when God is against them, and everything happens to their detriment if they do not turn to Him? Therefore, it terrifies them.

Providence is of great benefit.

XXII. However, all the benefits lie for the children of God. The clearer they understand their portion in God, the more benefit they can derive from God's Providence. So, all of you who experience deep, inward, and constant sorrow over sin, who continually turn

your eyes to the Lord Jesus to be justified by His blood, whose desire is communion with God, and who seek to love, fear, and obey the Lord despite many doubts and sins—come, I say, sit with me for a while, listen, and let my words enter your ears and hearts.

To become accustomed to contemplating it.

XXIII. 1. Cultivate the habit of seeing the hand of God in everything through much reflection, keen observation, and active belief in God's sustaining, cooperating, and governing role, both in creation and its movements. Behold it as one sees the sun shining through a windowpane. Whether you witness the sunrise in the morning, behold the bright moon and twinkling stars turning in their courses at night, see everything emerging from the earth, take note of all that transpires in the world—be it war, victory, defeat, peace, extraordinary changes, or reversals—whether you are in good health or unwell, experiencing constant adversity or facing one trial after another, whether deliverance and prosperity come your way, whether you are poor or rich, whether someone treats you kindly or with a frown, speaks to you harshly or with kindness, helps and comforts you or turns their back on you, lays snares for you or opposes you, speaks well or ill of you—in a word, from the greatest to the smallest, all happens by God's governance. Endeavor to constantly perceive God's hand at work in every matter.

It is not enough to merely utter these words and believe them as truth; that will not have a profound impact on the heart. I beseech you, strive to develop this truth as a habitual disposition through continuous effort, by constantly presenting and seeing it in your mind's eye. Strive to perceive God's hand at work so continually in and through secondary causes as if they did not exist, and God were the sole immediate actor. Seek to form this habit through active

engagement so that seeing God at work becomes effortless for you. Believe me, it takes more effort to learn this than we might think. Our atheistic and worldly hearts continually lead us away from such contemplation and recognition. A dark mist hinders us. Therefore, commit to it, pray for abundant light and keen observation, and persistently engage in this practice. You will discover the tremendous benefit it brings to your soul from all sides. Yet, be cautious not to delve too deeply into the "how" of God's maintenance, cooperation, and governance, for it is unfathomable. Simply believe and observe the matter itself with fresh insights, speak of it, and demonstrate it to others. You will find that you will traverse the world with greater comfort and holiness.

Seeing God's hand in everything.

XXIV. 2. Do not stop at the deeds of Providence alone; accustom yourself to recognizing God's majesty, power, wisdom, righteousness, and goodness in them. All creatures belong to Him, and all motion comes from Him. He reigns over everything in heaven and on earth, no matter how vast the structure, how many creatures, small or great, are within it, and no matter how varied their movements. Let this acknowledgment awaken humble reverence and awe within you. Is He not the Lord, the Lord alone, having everything in His hands to use for or against you? Are not all creatures His servants, responding to their Lord's command? Therefore, fear Him, bow down in awe before Him, and proclaim, "The Lord is God, the Lord reigns." God demands this of you: Jeremiah 5:22, "Do you not fear me? declares the Lord. Do you not tremble before me? I placed the sand as the boundary for the sea, a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass; though the waves toss, they cannot prevail; though they roar, they cannot pass over it." Oh, how sweet it is, in the contemplation of the all-working God, to bow down and worship Him!

Not depending on secondary causes.

XXV. 3. Do not depend any longer on secondary causes, do not lean on your possessions, strength, wisdom, or abilities. Do not look to friends or foes for support. Do not rely on ships, fortresses, or soldiers. Do not seek help from various people or means, as if you expected it from them. When God wills, He can change everything about them. What you think will save you may lead to your downfall, and what seemed your ruin may become your salvation. After all, creatures cannot act or move except by the influence of His power. What can they give or take from you? Why, then, do you look to them, when every one of them says, 'It is not in me!?' Moreover, relying on creatures for help is idolatry and a turning away from God. Jeremiah 17:5, 7, "Thus says the Lord: Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord... Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord." Learn this great lesson: let those who do not know God look to creatures and depend on them, but you, in the careful use of means, expect everything from the Lord as means. Look through all creatures to God; this will produce a stable and strong disposition of the heart. Psalm 125:1, "Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever."

To fear no creatures.

XXVI. 4. Now, do not fear creatures, for they cannot move or act of their own accord. God alone rules and governs them. If they come upon you, God sends them, determines them, and they can only carry out God's will. God restrains them, and God makes them depart. Who fears a sword, stick, or stone when they lie on the ground, devoid of any hand to set them in motion? If they wish to curse, they must bless; if they intend to blaspheme, they must praise;

if they desire to kill, they must kiss, as God wills it. So, if God is for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:31. And He is for you, children of God; so, what do you fear? All enemies are but a dreadful mask before a friend's face. Job 34:29, "When he is quiet, who can condemn?" Therefore, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul," Matthew 10:28. How tranquil is a soul that contemplates its enemies while sitting in the shelter of the Almighty and dwelling in the shadow of the Almighty! Psalm 91:1.

Not vengeful.

XXVII. 5. Do not be angry and vengeful toward those who harm you, for the Lord has commanded it; 2 Samuel 16:11. "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and take off his head." Who can speak a thing and have it come to pass, unless the Lord commands it? Lamentations 3:37. It is true they do it out of wickedness, but the Lord uses their wickedness as a rod to chasten and strike you. Isaiah 10. Therefore, do not bite the stone that was thrown at you as a dog would, but look higher to the hand of the One who uses them against us. Beware of murmuring against the Lord. Instead of being vengeful or angry with the instrument, consider the rod and the One who ordered it, Micah 6:9. "The Lord will accomplish what concerns me," Job 23:14.

Patient.

XXVIII. 6. Now, possess your souls in patience, for you need it. Evil does not befall you by chance, even when it happens through people. Even if your own foolishness and sin are the cause, it is still from the Lord, who ordained it over you, who determined it, who carries it out. Therefore, say with quiet submission, "He will complete what he has appointed for me," Job 23:14.

(a) Is He not the absolute sovereign Lord? Do you not grant Him that? Are you not glad that He is? Would you not defend His absolute sovereignty if someone challenged it? If so, why would you desire the chain of His Providence to break because of you? Would you want your will to rule over Him rather than His will over you? If not, how dare you grumble against Him? Be still and let His will be fully carried out over you because it is His will.

(b) Is He not your Father? Has He not loved you from eternity? Behold, in love, He sends evil your way. He chastises those He loves, Revelation 3:19. He pities you; He is with you in your distress; He knows your anguish; He sees your tears; He hears your cries; He will save you in His time and His way.

(c) The outcome will bring greater glory to His power, faithfulness, and goodness, and you will become humbler in heart and holier. As trials abound, consolations will also abound. Therefore, deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus, Matthew 16:24. Do not be irritable, and do not reject the discipline of the Lord. Do not be grieved by His chastisement. Proverbs 3:11. Be silent before the Lord and wait for Him, Psalm 37:7. Say with David, Psalm 39:10, "I will not open my mouth, for it is you who have done it." Yield yourself as clay in the hands of your Maker, and let Him mold you as He pleases. He will guide you by His counsel, and afterward, He will receive you to glory, Psalm 73:24. Is it not good whether He has led you through a sorrowful or joyful path? Blessed is blessed.

Grateful.

XXIX. 7. To use the Providence of God well, this leads to extraordinary gratitude. It teaches you to bring all the good you receive, both for your soul and body, to the Lord as the sole Giver. It reveals God's goodness, faithfulness, and benevolence. It brings joy

and prompts praise to God, to tell His virtues to others, and to willingly serve Him with a grateful heart. After all, He has given it, sometimes remarkably and in a wondrous way, and it was solely out of love. As it is from God, it must return to Him. For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever, Romans 11:36. Give thanks to God in everything, 1 Thessalonians 5:18. Continually follow David, saying, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits," Psalm 103:2. Oh, how sweet it is to remember past affliction, helplessness, and unworthiness to receive anything, and then to see that the Lord remembers us, that He Himself redeems and grants the desire. This leads to glorifying God and rejoicing in Him.

Quiet confidence.

XXX. 8. Thus, the soul gains good assurance and quiet confidence in God concerning the future. Fiery desires for the physical are restrained. The cross is not feared, and the frantic pursuit of various means to acquire them excessively, immoderately, and sinfully is stopped. You entrust it to the Lord's hands and are content with how He makes it, for you know it will be well. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act. Psalm 37:5. He cares for you, 1 Peter 5:7. He will complete it for you, Psalm 138:8. Behold, such benefits can be derived from the Providence of God. Therefore, who is wise? Let him consider these things. Let him understand and meditate on the kindness of the Lord, Psalm 107:43. Who is wise? Let him understand these things; who is discerning? Let him know them, Hosea 14:9.

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