

Monergism



WHAT IS MAN?

A STUDY IN BIBLICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

WILHELMUS À BRAKEL

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by Wilhelmus à Brakel

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Chapter 1

Of Man, and Especially of the Soul

Having spoken of the foremost creatures in heaven, the angels, we turn our attention to the contemplation of the foremost creature on Earth, Man. In the ancient Hebrew language, Man is called אָדָם Adam, derived from "red," for man, at his healthiest and most graceful, appears reddish in complexion (Lamentations 4:7). They were redder of body than rubies. Hence, also, comes אֲדָמָה Adamah, red earth. In Greek, Man is named anthropos, signifying upright, carrying his countenance upright. After the fall, Man is also referred to as vwna Enoosch, meaning miserable.

When the Lord had created all things and prepared the world most gracefully, He declared, "Let Us make man" (Genesis 1:26). This statement is not associated with the creation of other things, from which we can deduce the glory of Man above other creatures. God did not say this to the angels, for they cannot be placed on the same level as God; they are not co-creators, for that belongs solely to God, and Man was not created in the image of angels. Rather, it signifies the deliberation of the Triune God, spoken of in human terms, to create something magnificent. Thus, on the sixth day, God created the very last of His creatures, Man, and gave them no other name but Man. There was only one, and thus sufficiently distinguished by themselves. God created all angels simultaneously, for there is no reproduction among them. However, He created only one Man and filled the earth with humans through procreation (Malachi 2:15). Did He not make one, although He had the Spirit remaining? And why only one? He sought a seed of God.

Created from Earth

II. Man consists of two essential parts, body and soul. God formed the body from the dust of the earth (Genesis 2:7). The LORD God

had fashioned man from the dust of the earth. Regarding where man was created, whether within or outside the Garden of Eden, it is not described, and thus we cannot make any claims. However, it is written (Genesis 2:15), "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." Placing someone in a location for a task does not necessarily imply that they were previously outside that place. It is also written (Genesis 3:23), "So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken." Earth inside and outside the Garden is the same; he had to toil and sweat to cultivate the earth, which he was now taken from, to sustain his life.

Creation of Eve

III. After God created Adam and gave him the command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and after God brought all the animals and birds to Adam so he could name them, Adam realized that he was alone and had no helper. Then the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed up the place with flesh. The LORD God fashioned the rib, which He had taken from Adam, into a woman and brought her to Adam. Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man" (Genesis 2:21-23). Adam had an intimate knowledge of the nature of animals, enabling him to name each creature according to its kind. However, how Adam knew that Eve was created from his rib, whether he discerned it from Eve's nature or sensed a difference in his ribs, or if God revealed it to him, remains unknown. This marked the first marriage. It was not a symbol of the spiritual marriage between Christ and His Church, for Adam had no knowledge of Christ or any such example. Nevertheless, the Apostle Paul applies the first marriage to explain the spiritual marriage

(Ephesians 5:29). Woman was created alongside Adam on the sixth day, as stated: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27). After completing His work on the seventh day, God rested from all His work (Genesis 2:2). After that day, God did not create new beings. The account provided after the seventh day is a clearer description of what God had previously created, as it was mentioned briefly with a single word.

The Wonder of the Body

IV. God has ingeniously assembled the human body, intricately weaving it with bones, veins, nerves, and all its components, each proportioned and equipped to contribute to the well-being and movement of the whole. He has covered it with smooth skin, surpassing all other physical creatures in outward beauty. Therefore, Man rightfully earns the title of a microcosm, a little world. The Lord has endowed Man with five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Through these senses, all physical things are brought to the understanding of the soul, and the soul, in turn, interacts with physical things and gains knowledge from them. Some matters can be apprehended by a single sense, others by multiple senses, and some by all five. If any of these senses is impaired internally or if the conditions are not right for perception, one might easily misjudge an object unless a more careful examination is conducted. For example, a square tower may appear round from a distance due to the limitations of vision. A straight stick with one end in water may seem bent or broken. A white color may appear yellow or greenish when light passes through colored glass. However, through thorough examination, one arrives at the correct understanding. When various senses, all well-functioning and properly aligned with their objects, converge on an object consistently and universally among all people,

certainty is established. Through sensory experience, we ascertain that two plus two equals four, that this is straight, that is curved, this is long, that is short, this is hard, that is soft, this is white, that is black, this is heavy, that is light, this is hot, that is cold. Thus, humans have established certain principles and rules that contradicting them would be considered absurd. This pertains to the body.

Names of the Soul

V. The other part of Man is the soul, also referred to as the spirit. In Hebrew, it is called נֶפֶשׁ Nephesh, and in Greek, Pneuma, derived from "to blow," either because it was created with the breath or because it causes breathing through the nostrils, or perhaps due to its invisibility and swiftness.

Description.

The soul is a spiritual, incorporeal, unseen, intangible, immortal substance, endowed with intellect and will. United with the body, it constitutes a human being and, by its inner nature, is inclined to remain united with it.

It is a Substance, Not a Thought.

VI. The soul is a substance. This is evident:

1. Because it possesses intellect and will, which function through love and hatred, joy and sorrow. "My soul is very sorrowful" (Matthew 26:38). "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices" (Luke 1:46, 47). After the separation from the body, the soul continues to exist in essence and being, either rejoicing in heaven or experiencing sorrow in hell. Therefore, it is an

erroneous denial of the soul to claim that it is merely a thought because: (a) If it were a thought, there must be a substance producing that act of thinking, as thought is an action. To say that the soul is a substantial and independent thought is a contradiction, an absurdity, akin to calling white black because an action and a substance are fundamentally distinct; one is an act, the other is not. (b) Since humans continually think new thoughts and have new thoughts, it would mean that humans must have a different soul each time, which is absurd in itself. (c) Additionally, this contradicts the Word of God, where the soul is never referred to as a thought.

Furthermore, it is not accurate to say that the soul is a thinking being because:

(a) Thinking is not the form of the soul; an act or operation cannot be the form of a substance because it is the result of it.

(b) The soul does not always think immediately. It cannot occur during a deep swoon or in the initial union with the body before a person's birth. What would an unborn child think? Even if it did think, it would mean that humans sin in action before birth, contrary to what Paul states: "Though they were not yet born and had done nothing" (Romans 9:11). The soul is a substance, capable and inclined to think.

Each Human Has Only One Soul. VII. Every human has only one soul. There are three types of souls:

(1) Anima vegetativa, let's call it the vegetative soul, by which trees and plants are said to live.

(2) Anima sensitiva, the sensitive soul, through which animals live and feel. Scripture states that this soul exists in the blood of animals (Leviticus 17:11): "For the life of the flesh is in the blood" (Deuteronomy 12:23).

(3) Anima rationalis, the rational soul, which we are about to describe shortly and call rational because through it, humans reason and draw conclusions from one thing to another. A human grows, moves sensibly and locally, and reasons, not each through a different soul, but the rational soul alone accomplishes all these functions within a person, so that a human has not three or two but one soul. This is evident:

Proof 1.

VIII. The Word of God, which so comprehensively describes man in all his parts, nowhere states that man has two or three souls; therefore, such notions are to be rejected.

Proof 2.

Scripture only speaks of one soul of man, always in the singular form, just as it does with the body. Genesis 2:7 - "Thus the man became a living soul." Matthew 16:26 - "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?" Matthew 10:28 - "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." 1 Corinthians 6:20 - "For you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." When the soul is in the body, the person is alive. Acts 20:10 - "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." When the soul departs from the body, the person is dead. James 2:26 - "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead."

Proof 3.

Every animal exists independently by its soul and, thus, is a substance on its own. If man also had a sensitive soul alongside the rational soul, it would have to constitute the substance either in place of the rational soul or alongside it, resulting in two or three substances. The sensitive soul does not constitute the substance of man, for then man would be an animal substance. The presence of two souls does not make man, for then man would not be one but two substances. Therefore, since man is one, he has one soul.

Proof 4.

If man had two or three souls, then Christ would have had as many souls, for He became like us in every respect (Hebrews 2:14). This would mean that Christ not only took on human nature but also the nature of trees and animals, which is utterly absurd. It would imply that in death, the Divine nature of Christ was separated from what He had assumed in the unity of His person, as both souls are entirely destroyed in death.

Proof 5.

If man had two or three souls, there would be no resurrection of the body, for the two souls are entirely annihilated in death, and what is completely destroyed cannot be restored in the same number. Thus, a new soul, in addition to the rational soul, would have to be created, and it would be glorified or condemned without having existed previously or having done anything.

Proof 6.

If man also had an animal soul, a person could live without the rational soul, contradicting the Bible, which teaches that a person is dead when the rational soul departs, as demonstrated earlier. If a person could live without the rational soul, one would not know whether children possessed a rational soul or would acquire it later, raising questions about the timing of baptism. People also wouldn't know if a living person had a rational soul at that moment or if the soul had temporarily left on a journey, as according to such beliefs, the soul is where it thinks. Behold, the many absurdities inherent in this error that fundamentally denies the existence of the soul.

Is not created from God.

IX. This one soul of man is not created from God but is continually formed by God in procreation, coming into being from nothing in the body. That Adam's soul is not produced from any substance but from nothing is evident from Genesis 2:7. When God formed man's body from the dust of the earth, it was lifeless, but God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and thus man became a living soul. The act of breathing into the nostrils does not imply that the soul was created outside the body and then inserted into it; instead, it signifies the manner or sign of its creation, just as in John 20:22 when Jesus said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" and breathed on them. It expresses the swiftness of the soul like a wind, its invisibility, spirituality, and the power of the soul, causing man to breathe through his nostrils (Job 33:4). Thus, the soul of the first man was created within the body and from nothing.

X. One might wonder how human souls come into being. Are they generated through physical procreation, transferred and ignited like one candle passing its light to another? Or does God create a soul

each time a person is conceived? Answer: They are not generated by humans but are daily created by God.

Proof 1.

Since the soul is a spiritual substance and lacks any physical properties, no matter how refined one might imagine them, it cannot be brought into existence through physical and procreative means. A cause cannot produce something that, in its essence, belongs to a higher order than itself. If one were to argue that the soul comes from another soul, we must ask: from the father's soul, the mother's soul, or both? Not from both, for there is no mingling of souls. Not from one of them, either, for then the question remains: from the father or the mother? And there would be no satisfactory answer. Moreover, if the soul were produced from the parent's soul, how exactly does this process occur? If the parent's soul were entirely transferred, the parent would be left soulless. If it was transferred only partially, then the soul would be divisible, possess parts, and no longer be a spirit but a body. If one suggests that the parent's souls cause the soul to exist in the offspring causally, as if they were creating causes, we must ask: from what? Not from seed, not through the complete or partial transfer of the soul. It would have to come from nothing, which is equivalent to creation, a work exclusive to God. The analogy of a burning candle transferring its light to another is not applicable here because light has physical properties, and one candle transfers light with emitting particles to another candle, where it finds physical fuel.

Proof 2.

Scripture clearly states that souls are continually created by God within the fetus. Consider Ecclesiastes 12:7, "And the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it." This

verse distinguishes between body and soul, with their respective destinations, based on their two origins: from the earth and from God. Just as the body is from the earth, the soul is from God. See also Zechariah 12:1, "The LORD, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the spirit of man within him." Just as God created heaven and earth through His almighty power without any intermediary causes, He also forms the soul within man, without any intervening factors. See also Hebrews 12:9, where God is called the "Father of spirits" in contrast to the fathers of the flesh. See also Isaiah 63:16 and 1 Peter 4:19.

Proof 3.

The soul exists independently after a person's death, demonstrating its independence from the body in the beginning. It is immortal and cannot be killed. Matthew 10:28 states, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." If the soul originated from a human, it could be killed by humans just like the body, for the causal agent can also destroy its creation. But since the soul cannot be destroyed, it is not created by humans and is, therefore, not their causal product.

Objection 1.

XI. If only the body of man is generated, and not the soul, then man does not generate a man, for man consists of both soul and body. Response: Generation does not consist in the production of either the substance or the form. It is not the generation of the substance or body, for man does not create the substance that already existed as a creation of God. It is not the generation of the form or soul, as demonstrated in the first proof. Instead, generation is an act of the generator by which the substance and form are united, and thus the entire composite is brought forth. Therefore, man generates a man,

even though he does not generate either the body's substance or the soul's form. We can see this in the birth of the Lord Jesus, who is the God-man, born of Mary.

Objection 2.

Genesis 46:26 states, "All the persons who came with Jacob into Egypt, who had come from his loins, not including Jacob's sons' wives." This verse explicitly says that the souls of Jacob's descendants came from him. Response: This is a common metaphorical expression found both in Scripture and everyday language, where persons are referred to as souls. The whole is named after one part, just as we say "so many heads" to refer to "so many people." The persons came from Jacob through generation, as their existence was derived from him, either directly, such as his own sons, or indirectly, through his grandchildren.

Objection 3.

God completed the creation entirely in the first six days. Genesis 2:2. Therefore, God does not create the soul daily. Answer: In the first six days, God created all kinds of creatures, and after that time, He does not create new kinds of creatures but sustains what has been created, whether in the preservation of individual beings, such as angels, or in the continuation of species, as is the case with the human race through generation. Thus, God creates souls daily from humans, which are individuals of the same kind.

The soul is intelligent.

XII. This singular spiritual substance, not created by God from anything, is endowed with intelligence. Intelligence includes: a. comprehension, b. judgment, and c. conscience, or co-knowledge.

a. Simple comprehension is understanding something without making any assertions about it, merely recognizing it as such. This can be apprehended by one's intelligence without any further commentary. However, a person cannot understand something without making some statement about it, even if they don't consciously acknowledge what their intelligence thinks and says. This comprehension is like a mirror in which things presented to it are reflected. Just as a mirror shows nothing when nothing is presented to it, and even when something is presented, it shows nothing when it is pitch dark, and it shows something indistinctly when there is only a faint glimmer of light, or when it is fogged up so that one cannot say what it is. Similarly, the intelligence of a corrupted person behaves. It does not understand many things it should, sees other things in a confused and obscure manner, making it unclear what they are. Many things it misapprehends, presenting them in a different form and appearance. Therefore, it is a palpable error to say that the intelligence of a person in a state of sin cannot err.

XIII. This directly contradicts the Holy Scriptures, which explicitly state that man is blind (Revelation 3:17), darkened in understanding (Ephesians 4:18), and that spiritual matters are hidden from those who are naturally wise (Matthew 11:25). It says that one can have zeal without understanding (Romans 10:2), that man does not comprehend the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him (1 Corinthians 2:14), and that there are those with corrupt minds (1 Timothy 6:5).

Clear and distinct comprehension is not a rule of truth.

XIV. From this, it is evident that clear and distinct comprehension should not be set as a rule of truth. Having clear and distinct

comprehension, which means having neat, appropriate thoughts that correspond to the subject, is indeed a form of truth. However, truth does not depend on having clear and distinct comprehension, but rather it resides in the object itself. One often cannot know whether they have clear and distinct comprehension because what they thought was clear and distinct has often deceived them. Since our darkened and clouded understanding often imagines that a faint glimmer of light is the full noonday sun, it cannot be a reliable guide for those who rely on it as a rule of truth. Such individuals will remain in a state of doubt, ebbing and flowing, denying many things, including their own souls, because they cannot see these things clearly. Indeed, if someone wishes to test the matters revealed in the Word of God against their clear and distinct comprehension and accept them as truth only if they align, they will be labeled atheists. For their dim understanding will never ascribe full perfection to God, nor will it accept the Holy Trinity, God's providential involvement in the preservation and governance of all things, the personal union of the two natures in Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, and many other things. Instead, when we know what God reveals in His Word, we must believe it to be true and conduct ourselves accordingly, treating it as infallible truth. Otherwise, all faith and religion are lost. See Chapter 12, paragraph 27, and so on.

b. Judgment belongs to the understanding.

XV. Judgment also belongs to the understanding, whereby one deems something true or false, good or evil. This judgment can be either a knowing judgment, in which one merely declares something to be this way or that, without personal involvement, or an applicative judgment. The applicative judgment not only states what is true or false, good or evil, but also dictates what should or should not be done here and now, in these circumstances, along with

reasons to persuade and move the will. Bringing judgment to the will contradicts all judgment.

(1) For, let me speak according to their opinion: if clear and distinct comprehension is the standard of truth, and clear and distinct comprehension resides in the understanding, then judgment is also assuredly in the understanding. Because clear and distinct comprehension asserts something about the matter, whether it is true or false, good or bad, for without that, one cannot comprehend a matter clearly and distinctly and make it a standard of truth. Now, to say something is this way or that is a judgment about something, and thus, judgment resides in the understanding.

(2) Judgment often conflicts with the will when it declares in one's conscience: this is a sin; God sees it, God will punish it. Consequently, it causes unrest and distress in the will, and a person often wishes that this impression were not so vivid, but against one's will, it frequently persists. Thus, judgment does not reside in the will.

(3) Scripture also places judgment in the understanding: 1 Corinthians 10:15, "I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say."

(4) If judgment were in the will, a person would not commit sin, for sinners would desire it, and their actions would align perfectly with their judgment because they would correspond to their will. While it is true that a person does not judge something without the desire to judge it, the judgment itself does not belong to the will. Just as a person does not engage the understanding without the will to understand, it does not follow that the understanding belongs to the will. This conclusion is just as absurd as the first.

c. The conscience.

XVI. The conscience also belongs to the understanding. The very name suggests this, as "knowing" and "knowledge" pertain to the understanding, and "conscience" in our language means "co-knowledge" or "shared knowledge." Conscience is a person's judgment of themselves and their actions, insofar as they are subject to God's judgment. Three things belong to the conscience:

1. Knowledge of God's will, commanding or forbidding each person something with promises or threats, not only in general but also specifically, not just regarding things in general but also regarding circumstances here and now. Thus, the conscience prescribes to a person what they must do or avoid. The clearer and more powerful it does this, the better the conscience.
 2. In addition to this, there is a testimony of whether, according to this light and knowledge, one has acted as they should. The more carefully the conscience watches over one's actions and keeps an account of them, testifying more clearly and powerfully to the person, the better it functions.
 3. Following this, there is an acknowledgment that the righteous God also knows and will reward or punish accordingly. The clearer and more sensitive the conscience acknowledges God's knowledge, and the more it reassures or deeply troubles a person, the more faithfully it does its work. These three acts are combined by the apostle, Romans 2:14-15, "For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts." - This is the first act, namely, knowledge of God's will and law.
- He then adds the second act, the testimony of their conformity or divergence from the law, saying: "while their conscience also

bears witness." - Following this is the third act, namely, acknowledgment that God also knows it and will reward or punish. These acts are also evident in Romans 9:1, "I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit." Ecclesiastes 7:22, "Your heart knows that many times you yourself have cursed others." 1 John 3:20, "For whenever our heart condemns us." vs. 21, "Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us."

Is good or evil.

XVII. Conscience is either good or evil. It is good when it performs its duty well. (a) When it clearly, distinctly, and promptly represents and represents the will of God, binding and urging to do God's will. Romans 14:5, "One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind." (b) When it keeps clear and powerful records and convicts of deeds. (c) And also when it disturbs or reassures appropriately. Consider these two acts, 1 Samuel 24:6, "And he said to his men, 'The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the Lord's anointed, to put out my hand against him, seeing he is the Lord's anointed.'" 2 Corinthians 1:12, "For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience." It is said that a person has an evil conscience when someone is full of dread, fear, and remorse for committing abominations, not because the conscience is evil, for it does its duty well, but because it convicts of evil deeds. Conscience is evil in itself if it does not perform these three things well, whether it fails in all three, two, or one of the above-mentioned acts.

Can err.

XVIII. The question is: Can conscience err? This must be understood beforehand:

(a) That we consider humans not in the perfect state before the fall but in the imperfect state after the fall.

(b) That we are not discussing paying attention or turning to the knowledge by which one knows what they aim for, what they do, and is thus conscious of these actions.

(c) That we are not discussing bearing witness, whether a person follows their light or not.

(d) That we do not say that the second and third acts of the conscience err.

But we say that the first act of the conscience, which involves knowledge of God's binding law and will, can err and can present something as God's will when it is not, indeed when it is prohibited. This is the initial error; this is followed by the second act of the conscience, which is bearing witness, also erring. The error is not that the conscience testifies that the person has followed their light, but it errs in the testimony that the person has done well when they have done wrong, even though they may not have known any better or thought they were doing well. Someone can bear false witness in court without speaking against their conscience. They testify that something was done when it was not that person but someone else who did it; they speak according to their judgment; their conscience tells them they have given a good testimony and is satisfied. Nevertheless, it is wrong, the testimony is false, and the conscience testifies that an untrue matter was done well and correctly. Thus, the conscience errs, acquitting when it should convict. In various matters, the conscience can testify that a person has done well when they have committed the gravest sins. If the first act of the conscience errs in knowing God's will, then the other two acts must also err.

XIX. That conscience can err is indisputably confirmed by God's Word. Consider, among many, these passages: 1 Corinthians 8:7, "However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled." vs. 10, "For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols?" Here, the apostle speaks not of an opinion or passion but of the conscience and explicitly calls it the conscience. He says the conscience errs, for he calls it a conscience of the idol, which believes that an idol is something and should be honored. Was that not a gross error? This conscience could be emboldened in the error to continue more freely in the sin of idolatry.

Consider also John 16:2, "They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God." Acts 26:9, "I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth." While the word "conscience" is not mentioned here, the work of the conscience itself is portrayed. When one has a description of a matter, there is no need for the name. Here was a palpable and grave sin: to kill the godly and oppose Jesus; this sin arose not from malice but from error, from a mistaken understanding of God's will. That mistaken understanding compelled them to be faithful to their light and complete the work. After completing the work, their conscience testified that they had done well and gave them peace and satisfaction about that work, even though they had committed a heinous act. Their conscience should have convicted them that they had done wrong and troubled and terrified them. Thus, we see that conscience can err. Someone might ask, isn't it better to say that it is the opinion that errs?

I answer: the erring opinion is the erring understanding, a mistaken judgment, representing something as God's will that is not God's will and, by following it, satisfying the person as if it were done well. Therefore, it is the same as an erring conscience. Therefore, one must use common language, for strange expressions usually conceal strange feelings. At most, it would be a verbal dispute if we agreed on the matter.

Will.

XX. The human soul is also endowed with a will, which is a power to love or hate something. This power is called blind, not because humans would love or hate something without knowing it, but because it is not the will but the understanding that judges a matter, and the understanding presents the will as lovely or hateful, and that it must be done in the present circumstances here and now. This practical judgment embraces the will blindly and follows it. If that judgment errs, the will also errs. Sometimes the understanding presents something to the will, not as truth, but as pleasurable or advantageous, and in that form, the will embraces it, even if it goes against God's law.

The will is free, not in indifference, but in spontaneity.

The will is free; it cannot be coerced. Freedom does not consist in desiring or not desiring the same thing at the same time, for even holy angels have freedom in their wills, yet they can only do God's will. But freedom consists in spontaneity, willingly embracing or rejecting something out of one's own inclination and disposition. Even a child's will cannot be forced; as long as it does not want to, it will not go to school, no matter what is done. However, although it might not go if left to its own devices, circumstances, promises, or threats can change its will and make it go because it now wants to.

The soul is immortal.

XXI. The human soul is immortal. God could indeed destroy it if He wished, but God has established an eternal ordinance that He will not. It cannot be destroyed by any creature, and it cannot perish by an internal principle because it is a spirit. Thus, it is eternal. This impression is indelibly engraved in every person. God explicitly and indisputably states this in His Word, both regarding the souls of the godly and the souls of the ungodly. Consider this in general:

- Ecclesiastes 12:7, "and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it."
- Matthew 10:28, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul."

Regarding the souls of the godly:

- Matthew 22:32, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living."
- John 10:28, "I give them eternal life."
- Philippians 1:23, "I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better."
- Revelation 6:9-10, "When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne."

Regarding the souls of the ungodly:

- Matthew 25:46, "And these will go away into eternal punishment."
- 1 Peter 3:19, "in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison."

- Luke 16:23, "And in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes."

Thus, we see that the soul is immortal.

The soul is united with the body.

XXII. The soul, which God does not form outside the body or bring into existence independently, becomes essentially united with it while being formed in the body, so that together they constitute a suppositum, a person, a human being. They are not united in the manner of existence, as the angels were united with temporarily assumed bodies. Beware of considering the souls by themselves as angels, for they are not. Beware of thinking that it is indifferent to them whether they are united with the body or not, or that they would be better off alone; do not consider the union between the soul and the body as a marriage, for dangerous consequences and errors lurk in these assertions. Do not merely regard the body as an instrument or tool of the soul, for one substantial part cannot be an instrument of another part. The union is closer than one can comprehend. Together, they are a human being. The nature of the soul is to be united with the body, and when separated from the body by death, it goes against its nature. It exists but does not have complete fullness, joy, or sadness. We call the separated soul an incomplete substance, not because it is imperfect in itself, but because it is a part of the whole human being and does not cease to have the inclination to be united with its body.

XXIII. The soul, being so closely united with the body, remains in the body as long as a person lives. It is not in the place to which it thinks.

Evidence:

1. Because then the body would exist for some time and, for most of the time, without a soul, and thus dead. Nature and Scripture teach that a person dies when the soul departs, as we have proven above.
2. Experience teaches that the body moves and is affected by the soul's thoughts about other places, events, or what the soul imagines it sees and hears there. These thoughts lead to changes in blood circulation, heart palpitations, tears, laughter, and so on. If the soul were a hundred miles away at that moment, where would these reactions come from? Can a soul work at a distance, in remote places? Thus, it is certain that the soul is not in the place it thinks.
3. And if someone were to argue that the soul is where it thinks, they would contradict themselves with the discomfort they would feel if someone said they were without a soul. Imagination represents distant places and things, and that's how the soul thinks about things in its imagination. I cannot say in which part of the body the soul resides, whether entirely in the whole body and in every part, or in the heart, or in the brain, or in the gland called the pineal gland. Just as the union is hidden from us, so is the location in the body. One must be careful not to disrupt the close union by determining the soul's location, and in order to do that better, one should not make such a determination or be misled by it.

Man is created in the image of God.

XXIV. Man, consisting of such a skillfully and beautifully prepared body and such a noble soul, was created in a perfect state. God created all things good; each goodness consisted in a degree of perfection to be such a creature; the goodness of man consists in the image of God. Sometimes this is said of the second Person of the

Divine Being, the Son, who is the radiance of the glory of the Father and the exact imprint of his nature (Hebrews 1:3), the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). But here, we take it accidentally for the perfection of man, consisting in some likeness to the communicable attributes of God. We say "likeness" because the attributes of God Himself are not communicated or transferred, only their likeness. The Holy Scripture speaks of this in Genesis 1:27, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him." In verse 26, the word "likeness" is added: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." These two words are the same and mean a very similar image. The image of God does not consist primarily in the body's perfection because God is a Spirit. It does not primarily consist in rulership, which is stated there as a consequence of the image, but it consists in the soul.

Its basis.

XXV. To understand this image of God well, one must distinguish three things in it: namely, the basis, the form, and the consequence. The basis or the prerequisite is the spirituality and rationality of the soul. The form consists of the qualities in the faculties. The consequence is rulership. By way of analogy: If a painter is to create a good painting, they must first have a good and well-prepared canvas or panel; they cannot paint on water, in the air, or in dry sand, but they need a solid surface that must also be prepared. Having that, they must then accurately reproduce the model they wish to express.

The basis, the canvas, is here spirituality, rationality, and the immortality of the soul's being, and, more specifically, the faculties or powers of the soul, such as intellect, will, emotions. The soul had to possess such qualities for the image of God to be imprinted upon it. The form of the image of God does not consist in these qualities

because both humans and even demons still have them, both before and after the Fall. When God forbids killing a person because they are created in God's image (Genesis 9:6), this refers to what they had and to this portrait that was present when the image of God was imprinted. God did not want this portrait to be violated. The spirituality and power of the soul are part of the image of God, just as the portrait is part of the painting; it can still be and remain, even if the image that was on it has been erased to the point where one can no longer find any resemblance in it, although one can still see that something was there.

The Form of God's Image

XXVI. The true form, the genuine essence of the image of God, consists of the qualities of the faculties of the soul: intellect, will, and emotions, namely, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.

(a) The intellect was pure, clear, beholding God directly in His essence and manner of existence in the Holy Trinity. In that immediate contemplation of God lies the blessedness of angels and humans. Psalm 17:15 says, "As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness." 1 Corinthians 13:12 adds, "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face." 1 John 3:2 promises, "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is." Even if Adam did not have the same degree of vision that the glorified in heaven enjoy, which was presented and promised to him if he obeyed, his knowledge of God was still perfect and sufficient for him to rejoice in that God, more than we can imagine. Adam had this light because he was created in the image of God, which consists of

knowledge. See Colossians 3:10, "Put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator."

(b) Alongside this, the will was holy and righteous, satisfied and content with God. It was joyful and fervent in love, desiring nothing apart from God, and it obeyed God's will willingly, cheerfully, and perfectly. Everything was pure, radiant, and glorious both outwardly and inwardly. This was the image of the Holy God, which can be seen in Ephesians 4:24, "Put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."

(c) The emotions were well-regulated, not outrunning reason and will but following them orderly. All desires and passions were directed towards God, desiring to enjoy Him continually and to fulfill His will.

(d) His memory was strong and vivid; as he paid attention to everything, he remembered everything and, in recalling past events and comparing them with the present, he saw God's wisdom, goodness, and power, glorifying God.

(e) All parts of the body were instruments of righteousness to carry out and display that holiness. In short, everything in Adam and everything that came from him was light, holiness, righteousness, orderliness.

The Consequence.

XXVII. The consequence of the image of God is dominion over the entire earth. Genesis 1:26 states, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the livestock, and over all the earth." When man was created in God's image, God said

to him, "Have dominion" (Genesis 1:28). Adam exercised this dominion by naming every animal (Genesis 2:20). God is awesome to all creatures, and wherever a spark of God is present, it is also awesome, as seen when a holy angel appears to humans. God gave Adam the power to rule and gave animals a disposition to be submissive. Through sin, humanity lost that right, but God said to Noah, "The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth" (Genesis 9:2). David praised the Lord for this, saying in Psalm 8:7, "You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet." Unconverted individuals rule over some animals, and they often do so by force. However, the children of God have regained the right to dominion over all things, although the full exercise of this dominion is not yet granted to them because it is not beneficial for them.

Man has never been without this image for a single moment.

XXVIII. Man possessed the image of God from the very first moment of his existence. He was not initially created in *puris naturalibus*, in mere naturalness, without knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, having only a body and soul, and in the latter, intellect, will, affections, and memory, devoid of any goodness or wickedness.

Proof

1. For Scripture does not state this anywhere, and therefore, such a notion should be rejected.
2. He was created in the likeness of God. Just as a painter, when wishing to depict a person, does not first create something without a likeness and then introduce the form and likeness into it, but instead strives to express the image in every stroke, similarly, when God created man, He fashioned him in His image and expressed it during the act of creation.

3. Furthermore, man was created very good (Genesis 1:31). Ecclesiastes 7:29 states, "See, this alone I found, that God made man upright." Now, without this image, man would not be very good or upright, for he would lack the pinnacle of his perfection, remaining not much better than a beast. Indeed, the absence of the image of God is sin.
4. Man was created for the glorification of God in Himself and in His works. This purpose could not be achieved without the image, without knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.
5. Just as man is recreated according to the image of God, so must Adam have been created in that manner. Now, man is indeed reformed according to God's image; therefore, Adam was created in such a way.

The image of God is not added to man above his nature.

XXIX. Although man was created with and in this image, it was not added to him above his nature to prevent irregularities that might arise between the higher and lower faculties, namely, intellect, will, and affections, or to prevent marriage (as absurdly suggested) between soul and body from becoming a contentious union. Rather, it was natural to him. It did not belong to the essence of the soul, nor was it a substantial part of man, nor even a substantial property. Consequently, when man lost the image of God, he did not lose his nature. Just as health, flowing from the well-being of soul and body, is natural, so too the image of God was natural to him. It pertained to the well-being of man and is therefore called original righteousness. This is evident as follows:

Proof

1. In the state of perfection, Adam had no affections that opposed his reason; otherwise, he would not have been perfect but, by his

nature, contrary to the Tenth Commandment, which forbids discontentment and covetousness.

2. He was very good from his very beginning, bearing the image of God; hence, original righteousness was natural to him.
3. Conformity to the law of nature is not supernatural but natural for man (Romans 2:14-15). Much more so was the perfect conformity imprinted in the first man.
4. If man had not sinned, the original righteousness would have been propagated to his descendants, making it natural for them.
5. The privation, the deprivation of the image of God, and corruption are now natural to man. We were by nature children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3). Therefore, the disposition of original righteousness in the perfect man was also natural.

The dwelling place of man was the paradise.

XXX. Man, being created holy and glorious, was placed in paradise as his dwelling place. The word "paradise" is not found in the Old Testament except in Song of Solomon 4:13. It is commonly called Eden, which derives from delightfulness. It was a garden of God created on the fourth day, the most delightful place on the Earth. It was located eastward from the Mediterranean Sea, as far as one can infer. Nevertheless, the precise location and size remain uncertain. It is believed that it has been so ravaged, either by different means or by the deluge, that even if one were on the spot, it would not be recognizable. It was enclosed and inaccessible from all sides, such that neither man nor beast could enter or exit except through a specific path, which was appointed to guard access to it for fallen man (Genesis 3:24). The delightfulness was so great that, by comparison, the third heaven is called paradise in parables (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 12:4; Revelation 2:7).

XXXI. In the midst of this garden of Eden was the Tree of Life, which we believe was not a variety of trees but a singular tree. (Genesis 2:9) The LORD God made every tree grow... and the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden. Thus, this tree was not found in other places. This Tree was not an image of the second Person in the Godhead, the Son, for the following reasons:

(a) There is no evidence of this anywhere in Scripture.

(b) It is also incongruous with the Godhead for it to be represented by a physical image, especially a tree, as God prohibited the making of any physical likeness of Him, which He did not do Himself.

(c) It would not have been advantageous to the perfect man, who had a right understanding of God.

(d) The Lord Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the covenant of grace, is called the Tree of Life (Revelation 2:7, 22:2). Not because He was prefigured by that tree, for Adam in a state of perfection had no Mediator, nor was the Mediator revealed to him as coming. Even though he could believe all that was presented to him by God to believe, he did not believe in Christ because Christ was not presented to him. If the tree had been an image of Christ, then Adam, now being under the covenant of grace, should have been allowed to eat from that tree. Instead, he was specifically forbidden from doing so. Christ is called the Tree of Life by application, by analogy, due to the power of His mediatorial office through which He is the life of His people, giving them eternal life, of which the tree of life was a symbol and sacrament for Adam.

Had no natural power to preserve life. This tree had no natural power to preserve man from death because:

(a) Immortality did not have its foundation in the tree, and

(b) Not a word of it is mentioned in Scripture.

(c) How would the descendants of Adam, if he had remained in a state of perfection and filled the whole world, have managed without this single tree, found only in the paradise? Would they all have died?

(d) All the other trees were meant for his food, and his body was created in such a state of perfection that it was not subject to illness and therefore required no medicines. Thus, the tree alone served as a sacrament of eternal life.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

XXXII. In paradise, there was also the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which Adam was not allowed to touch or eat from (Genesis 2:17). "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat" (Genesis 3:3). Just as the Tree of Life was singular, there was only one Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil—not in terms of species, for that is not stated, but in terms of number, and it is simply referred to as "the tree." The reason for this name can be inferred from the name itself, namely:

(a) Because it was a test tree by which God wanted to test whether man would persist in doing good or fall into evil, as 2 Chronicles 32:31 says, "God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart."

(b) Because if he ate from it, he would know how good he had it and in what sinful and sorrowful state he had placed himself.

Adam's task. In this garden, the Lord placed Adam and Eve to cultivate and keep it (Genesis 2:15), so that the animals would not enter it, trample and consume the neat plantings, the beautiful flowers, and the fragrant herbs. He was to cultivate the garden, shape the trees by pruning them to make them fruitful, sow and plant as he pleased—not as a burden or toil but for his pleasure and delight. For a perfect man, being inactive was neither desirable nor appropriate. Except on the Sabbath day, when he had to rest, ceasing from work according to the example given and commanded by his Maker.

XXXIII. Thus, Adam had everything in perfection and delight for body and soul, and, without experiencing any death, after completing his probationary period, he would have been transferred to the third heaven, to eternal glory. The immortality of the soul has been demonstrated in this chapter. Although the body was composed of materials, it was in such a condition that, when essentially united with the immortal soul, it was capable of living without ever being subject to sickness or death.

Man would not have died if he had not sinned. Man would also not have died if he had not sinned but would have ascended to heaven with body and soul. This is evident from:

1. The promise of eternal happiness, conditional upon complete obedience, which will be discussed below. According to God's truth, man would not have died but would have lived eternally upon fulfilling this condition.
2. God's threats in Genesis 2:17, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." If he had died nonetheless, the threat would not have been a threat. Just as the threat was death upon sin, death also only came because of sin, as seen in Genesis 3:17-19, Romans 5:12 ("Wherefore, as by one man sin entered

into the world, and death by sin"), Romans 6:23 ("For the wages of sin is death"), and James 1:15 ("Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death").

XXXIV. In such glory and immortality, with the promise of eternal bliss, God created Adam, and in him, the entire human nature and all humans, as they were created in him. So skillfully did He fashion his body. Who are they now, those who blaspheme Reformed doctrine, claiming that we assert that God created one person for salvation and another for damnation? We affirm that God created all humans for salvation in Adam and that it is each person's own fault if they are condemned.

Here is material for the glorification of God.

- Here is cause to exalt and praise God, for creating humanity with such exceptional aptitude in body and soul and placing them in such sanctity and glory, to the honor of their Creator, that they may praise and glorify Him not only in all the works of the Lord but also in their own creation and formation. Here we see the heinousness of sin, as humanity, endowed with so many excellencies and bound to their Creator by so many bonds of love, has deviated from Him, despised Him, and rejected His lordship. Instead, they desired to be their own masters and live according to their own will.
- Here is reason to commend the justice of God when He repays the sinner according to their ways and condemns them. Here shines the incomprehensible goodness and wisdom of God, as He reconciles such sinful people, though not all of them, to Himself through the Mediator Jesus Christ. He sanctified Him from Adam and caused Him to emerge from the same nature

that had sinned, making Him bear the punishment of sin from His own nature and fulfill all righteousness. He adopts such people as His children once again, welcoming them into eternal salvation. To Him, eternal praise and honor are due. Amen.

Chapter 2

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.

1. 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).

2. 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.

3. 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.

Chapter 3

On the Covenant of Works.

In the eighth chapter, we presented Adam in his excellent, holy, and glorious nature. Now we shall present him as standing with God in a Covenant, namely, the Covenant of Works. Much depends on understanding this, for one who errs in this matter or denies the Covenant of Works will struggle to comprehend the Covenant of Grace and may easily go astray regarding the mediation of the Lord Jesus. Particularly, there is a risk of denying that Christ, through His active obedience, acquired a rightful claim to eternal life for the elect. As seen in various parties who, due to their errors in the latter, deny the former, one who denies the Covenant of Works is rightly to be suspected of having some deficiencies concerning the Covenant of Grace as well.

Description.

II. The Covenant of Works is an agreement between God and the human race in Adam, in which God promises eternal salvation upon the condition of obedience and threatens eternal death if he disobeys, a promise and condition that Adam accepted.

The question at hand is whether such a covenant was made between God and the human race in Adam. We unequivocally say yes. While the order of discussing a matter typically requires first determining if such a matter exists and then understanding its nature, in this case,

it is necessary to first grasp the nature of this Covenant because the truth of its existence must primarily be proven from its nature. Thus, we must seek the arguments.

First Proof:

Because all the elements of a covenant are present. When God gave Adam a law, the content of which is identical to that of the Ten Commandments, promised eternal salvation, which Christ in the Covenant of Grace has acquired for the elect, appointed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as a test, and the tree of life as a sacrament of life, and Adam, by accepting both the promise and the condition, bound himself to God, there is indeed a Covenant of Works between God and Adam. Now, all of this is true, therefore, such a Covenant exists.

Parties.

The first party is God, as sovereign, holy, and good. III. First, we will examine one party and its work, and then the other party and its work. The first party is God, who appears in this Covenant as:

(a) The first, the eternal, the supreme, the sovereign Lord, who has the power over His creatures to prescribe, command, and promise as He pleases. He is the only Lawgiver (James 4:12).

(b) Holy and just, finding pleasure only in the holiness of rational creatures and unable to leave unrighteousness unpunished.

(c) Infinitely good and willing to share His goodness with humanity. His covenant work includes: (1) Giving the law. (2) Promising salvation and threatening damnation. (3) Appointing a sealing tree and a test tree.

(1) God gave Adam a law. IV. The first matter to prove is that God gave Adam a law, a law whose content is identical to the Ten Commandments. A law is a rule given by God to govern a person's internal disposition and actions, teaching what is good and evil, and binding the individual to obedience through its divine authority. Human reason, even if it were perfect and could fully comprehend what the law demands, is not the standard of good and evil. Something is not good or evil simply because right reason says so; right reason does not bind a person to obedience; it merely serves as a means to know and recognize both the law and the obligation. The divine law and divine authority, on the other hand, are the standards of good and evil, binding one to obedience.

... which arises from His will.

I say, God gave humanity a law. This prerogative belongs to Him alone. The question arises: Do the laws God gives stem from God's nature or His free will? I answer: They originate from God's will in accordance with His nature. They proceed not from a will of necessity or indifference, as if God could command the opposite, namely, to hate God and one's neighbors, and that anger, envy, hatred, vengeance, pride, and other sins would be considered holiness, and that God could promise eternal happiness in the midst of sin. Such notions are contrary to God's nature and, consequently, His will. Likewise, God could not leave a rational creature without law.

Proof 1.

V. That God gave Adam a law is evident as follows: 1. Rom. 2:14, 15. These Gentiles, having no law, are a law to themselves, showing the work of the law written in their hearts. If even after the Fall, people have a law inscribed in their hearts, though imperfect and obscure,

then Adam in a state of perfection had a law. The reason for this conclusion is that the law of nature flows from the knowledge of God. Adam had much clearer knowledge of God than the Gentiles after the Fall, and therefore, a more perfect law. Furthermore, knowledge of the law and conformity to it are part of human nature's perfection. After the Fall, those are considered the best who possess the most knowledge and conformity to the law. Therefore, perfect Adam had clearer knowledge and conformity to the law and thus had a law.

Proof 2.

Rom. 8:3, 4. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us. The apostle asserts that there is a law that pertains to all humans and that this law in itself has the power to justify a person who fulfills it. He also declares that this law has become weak and unable to justify due to the presence of sin, and the reason for this is that it has become powerless through the flesh, i.e., through sin. Where there is transgression of the law, it cannot justify because the law is the truth. The law, therefore, was once potent, which was not the case after the Fall. Hence, it existed before the Fall, when there was no sin.

Arising from God's and humanity's nature.

3. The nature of God and Adam necessitates that Adam had a law. By His nature, God is the First, the Supreme, and worthy of all honor and service. As soon as there is a creature, He is above that creature, and that creature is beneath Him, including the rational creature, humanity. This dependence on God is not solely because He created humanity or because He entered into a covenant with humanity or because humanity sinned, but it is particularly due to God's nature as

Jehovah. Likewise, Adam, as a created being, needed to be entirely dependent on his Maker in everything; otherwise, he would be God himself. One cannot understand the nature of a creature without understanding its dependency. If Adam was dependent on God, then he was dependent not only in his existence but also in his actions, not only in those actions that he shared with animals but also in his rationality, which allowed him to perform intelligent work. Since God, by His nature, is the Supreme Being and independent, rightfully deserving honor, service, and fear (Jer. 10:7), and humanity is dependent in its nature, actions, and rationality, then humanity, in its perfection, required a standard, a rule by which its nature and actions should be governed—that is, a law. This law was inherent in Adam's nature, so he did not need to search as an ignorant person for what he should do or avoid, nor did he need to worry that his desires would lead him astray. A knowledge of and conformity to the law were impressed upon his nature.

Objection 1.

VI. The righteous are not under the law, but the unrighteous are, 1 Tim. 1:9. I respond: The law can be regarded either as a lovable, binding rule or as a compelling rein through fear and dread of punishment. The righteous have the law as a lovable, binding rule, joyfully acknowledging that they are under it. However, they are free from the terrifying constraint because perfect love casts out fear, 1 John 4:18. The unrighteous, on the other hand, are under the law's dreadful constraint, as it demands punishment for their deeds. "*Boni virtutis amore oderunt peccare; mali formidine poenae oderunt peccare*": The good do not sin out of love for virtue; the wicked avoid sin out of fear of punishment.

Objection 2.

Adam was in perfect love for God, and therefore, no law could exist because he did everything spontaneously, willingly, and by his nature. I respond:

(a) The law is love, as stated in Matthew 22:37-39. If Adam had perfect love, then he had the perfect law.

(b) The law is freedom, as indicated in James 1:25, the perfect law of liberty. If Adam lived in holy freedom, he was under the law of liberty.

(c) Doing something naturally and doing it by law are not in contradiction. Gentiles also naturally did things prescribed by the law.

(d) Is not violating love a sin? And is sin not unrighteousness? Therefore, even in perfect love, there exists a law.

(e) Adam, in a state of perfect love, faced the threat of death, and where there is a threat of punishment for transgression, there is a law. Thus, Adam had a law.

Adam's law was the law of the Ten Commandments.

VII. Now, the question arises: What law did Adam have? I respond: Besides the prohibition regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam, as far as content is concerned, had the law of the Ten Commandments. This is evident from the following:

1. Without a doubt, Adam had the most perfect law. Now, the most perfect law is the law of love, and this is the law of the Ten Commandments, as seen in Matthew 22:37-39. Therefore, Adam had the law of the Ten Commandments.

2. The law that Gentiles had in their nature, which is a remnant of the law that Adam had in his nature, is identical to the law of the Ten Commandments by common consent. Thus, Adam's law was the law of the Ten Commandments.
3. This is evident from Romans 8:3, as mentioned earlier. There, Paul speaks of a law, referring to it without further description. The law is the law of the Ten Commandments, which, as shown, was in force during Adam's time but became powerless after the Fall.
4. There is only one holiness because holiness is God's image, which is one. Therefore, the law is also one. The perfect conformity of humanity to the law of the Ten Commandments is holiness. Hence, perfect Adam had the Ten Commandments as his law, as far as content is concerned.

The specific command regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. VIII. In addition to the law of nature, God gave Adam a command that He could freely give or not give. This command was not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, as we previously mentioned. A thought may arise: Why did God give Adam this command? If God had not given it, Adam would not have sinned. I respond:

(a) It does not necessarily follow that Adam would not have sinned if God had not given this command. He was holy but mutable; he could have sinned in other ways.

(b) God does not always provide reasons for His actions. If anyone wished to speculate on this command, it included much that demonstrated that God alone was the Lord who could command whatever He pleased, and Adam was to obey blindly without questioning "why?"

(c) It conveyed that humans should desire nothing except God's will, and everything should be desirable or undesirable solely because of God.

(d) It showed that humanity's happiness lay in the enjoyment of God, not in something outside of Him, and that humanity did not need the most desirable thing but could do without it.

(e) It also indicated that one should be content with the degree of perfection that God grants for the present, and the like. But the question of why God gave such a command can only be answered by saying it was God's sovereign pleasure. Thus, we have seen that Adam had a law.

IX. (2) The second point to establish is that Adam had a promise of eternal blessedness. This is evident from the following:

1. Even among the Gentiles today, we find traces of this truth. Just as God has engraved in the heart of humans the knowledge of His existence and what He requires of them, so too is imprinted upon them the idea of reward for the righteous and punishment for the wicked. This is evident in the diaries of seafarers who, upon encountering non-Christians in places where Christianity has never reached, observed that these people would use hand gestures to indicate that the righteous would ascend to heaven, pointing upwards, while the wicked would descend to hell, pointing downwards. Paul also testifies that the conscience of the Gentiles accuses or excuses them, as mentioned in Romans 2:15. If the Gentiles possess knowledge of reward and punishment based on their adherence to the engraved law, then surely Adam, who perfectly upheld the law, had knowledge of promises of reward.

2. We have previously demonstrated that Adam's law was the law of the Ten Commandments. Now, the law of the Ten Commandments included the promise of eternal life, as evident in Matthew 19. A young man inquired in verse 16, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" To this, Christ responded in verse 17, "If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." Also consider Leviticus 18:5, which states, "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them." Thus, Adam had the promise of eternal life through his obedience to this same law.
3. Christ, in His redemptive work, obtained eternal life for the elect by subjecting Himself to the law, sufficiently atoning through the bearing of the punishment and through perfect holiness of nature and deeds, as is evident in Romans 8:4, where the apostle declares that through Christ's satisfaction, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled for the elect. Furthermore, in Galatians 4:4-5, we read, "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." Here, the same law that Adam had, the Lord Jesus placed Himself under, thereby obtaining redemption and adoption for the elect. And if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, as stated in Romans 8:17. Therefore, eternal glory is found in obedience to the law, and consequently, Adam, having the same law, had the promise of salvation.
4. The same life that is granted through faith in Christ is also promised through perfect obedience to the law. Now, eternal life is granted to the elect through faith in Christ; likewise, it is granted through perfect obedience to the law. The apostle

illustrates this shared promise through both aspects in Romans 10:5, 6, and 9. He states, "Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on the law shall live by that righteousness. But the righteousness based on faith says...if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart...you will be saved." Galatians 3:11 also affirms, "Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for 'The righteous shall live by faith.' But the law is not of faith; rather, 'The one who does them shall live by them.'" Here, we see one promise: life, eternal life. Concerning the law, it has already been discussed in Matthew 19:16-17. Regarding faith, John 3:36 declares, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life." The apostle demonstrates that these two paths lead to the same end: Adam, possessing the law, had the promise of eternal life, which is now obtained through faith.

5. This is further evidenced by the threat in Genesis 2:17, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." The threat is death without any qualification. If anyone wishes to limit this death to temporal death, they must prove such a limitation, which they will never do, as there is neither language nor sign indicating such a limitation. However:

(a) It is well known that death encompasses both eternal damnation and temporal death. In 2 Corinthians 2:16, we read of a fragrance of death leading to death. 1 John 5:16 speaks of a sin leading to death. Revelation 20:6 emphasizes that the second death has no power over those who belong to Christ.

(b) The threatened death was a consequence of sin, and the punishment for sin includes not only temporal death but also eternal

death, which stands in stark contrast to eternal life, as stated in Romans 6:23. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life. Matthew 25:46 distinguishes between the eternal punishment of the wicked and the eternal life of the righteous. The apostle explicitly declares in Romans 5:16 that through one transgression, condemnation came upon all people, and in verse 18, he reiterates that the guilt resulted in condemnation for all. No one can deny that this single transgression was the act of eating from the forbidden tree. Therefore, the threatened consequence of death implies that life would have been granted if Adam had not sinned. This is all the more significant because who can, and who would dare to think, that the benevolent God would pronounce and bring about eternal punishment for disobedience while withholding eternal happiness for obedience? Such an idea would suggest that His punishments are infinitely greater than His goodness.

6. This is also evident from the Tree of Life. Here, two trees stand in contrast to each other. One is a symbol of eternal death; could the other not be a symbol of eternal life? The very name implies it; it is emphatically called the Tree of Life. What else can we infer but that it is a sacrament, a sealing sign of life? Here, we must not limit its meaning solely to physical life, for we must not make such a narrow interpretation. If he lost physical life, he also lost the spiritual life he possessed at that time. Therefore, by "life" here, we must understand both the physical and spiritual life that he possessed then, as well as the eternal happiness that is often understood under the term "life," even without the word "eternal" attached to it, as seen in Matthew 19:17: "If you want to enter life," and Matthew 7:14: "The way that leads to life," among many other verses. Hence, the Lord did not want him to partake in the seal of eternal life after he had lost the reality of it. See Genesis 3:22, where the Lord turned him away from the

Garden by an angel so that he would not reach out his hand and take from the Tree of Life, eat, and live forever.

When he sinned by eating from the one tree to which he had no right, God did not want him to eat from the other tree now that he no longer had the right to it. But would he truly have lived eternally if he had managed to reach that tree and eat from it? Certainly not. For in that tree, there was no power to restore the lost spiritual life and communion with God, and Adam knew this well. What good would physical life have been to him without spiritual life? Furthermore, in that tree, there was no power to nullify and annul God's threat: "You shall surely die," even though it could have sustained his physical life, which he still couldn't do, as he also understood.

So why did God say, "and live forever"? I answer: It is a reproachful and mocking way of speaking, as is evident from the same verse: "Man has become like one of Us." It is as if God were saying, "Look, there stands the man who, by eating from the forbidden tree, thought he would become like Us. See how much he resembles Us now!" This is essentially saying, "How deceived he is in his endeavors," because instead of becoming like Us, he has become unlike Us! So the expression "and live forever" implies that he would now also find himself deceived in his endeavor and intention if he thought he would live eternally by eating from this tree, as if the tree would still serve as a sacrament of life after the sin. God did not want him to misuse the sacrament now that he had sinned against the very thing, eternal life. The Lord desired that he would now turn away from the broken covenant of works, realize his lost state, and place all hope in the seed of the woman, which was promised to him shortly thereafter.

The other party is Adam.

X. So, we have seen the work of one party, namely that God gave Adam a law, the content of which is the same as that of the Ten Commandments; promised the eternal blessedness that Christ acquired for the elect and grants them through faith; appointed the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil as a test, and the Tree of Life as a sealing sign. Thus, all the necessary conditions of a covenant are present on one side. Now, we must show the other party and its work, which is essential in any covenant transaction.

He Entered into the Covenant.

The other party is the human race in Adam, adorned with the image of God, which consists of a pure knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness. He understood both the condition and the promise, being capable of fulfilling the condition. The question arises: Did he truly accept the Covenant since nothing is explicitly written about it? I answer that, although it is not expressly stated in Scripture, it is nevertheless evident.

First Proof

XI. First, he accepted both the condition and the promise. This is evident in the following ways:

1. It often happens that the promise of the covenant on one side is mentioned while the entire covenant is understood. For example, Genesis 3:15, "He [the seed of the woman, which is Christ] shall bruise your [the serpent's] head." It is known that the covenant of grace is established here, yet not a word is mentioned about Adam and Eve's acceptance. Similarly, in this case, since all the conditions of a covenant on one side are mentioned, it necessarily implies the consent of the other party.

2. Adam was perfect, and apart from God having the authority to command, Adam, due to his perfect obedience, could not refuse. He could not do otherwise than to accept both the condition and the promise. For can a rational being, fully aware of communion with God on a lower level, do anything other than love and desire a higher level of that blissful communion? Can he do otherwise unless he is deprived of his reason and love for his well-being? Can he do otherwise than wholeheartedly embrace the promise when such things are offered to him, as we have just seen they were promised to him? It is the same with the condition because it is not only a way to salvation but was his present salvation itself, namely, perfect love for the lovable God and submission to that worthy sovereign Lord. He possessed this love, joy, and contentment. So, he could not do otherwise than accept the promise for the reasons stated, and he could not do otherwise than accept the condition for the same reasons since the promise and the condition differed not in kind but in degree.
3. This is also evident from the behavior of all humans. Nature teaches them to say, "The command is holy, righteous, and good. I approve of it, and I acknowledge that I am bound by it. I also approve of this binding and consider it my duty. I willingly bind myself to it and embrace the promise of receiving heaven through obedience." Thus, we find that even after the fall, a natural person still accepts both the promise and the condition. Certainly, the perfect man could not have done otherwise than to accept both the condition and the promise for the same reasons.
4. That Adam and Eve accepted the promise and condition is also evident from the fact that they abstained from and refused to eat

from the forbidden tree because the Lord had forbidden it. Where there is obedience and refusal to transgress due to a prohibition, there is acceptance. Now, this is clear from the history of Genesis 3. Therefore, Adam and Eve did accept the condition and promise; consequently, there was a perfect covenant between God and humanity.

So, we now construct the sought and found concluding argument: Where there is a law as a condition, where promises are given upon the fulfillment of that condition, where a test sign and a sealing sign, which is a sacrament, exist, and where both the condition and promises are accepted, there is a covenant. Now, all of this is present here. Thus, there is a covenant between God and Adam. We do not mention paradise or the Sabbath because we do not recognize them as sacraments, just as we do not consider the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil as one.

Second Proof.

XII. With the previous point established, our next proof becomes clearer, which we take from Hosea 6:7, "They have transgressed the covenant, even like Adam." Here, there is mention of a covenant, a covenant with Adam, and a breach of a covenant. Two difficulties can be addressed here: whether the word "Adam" should be translated as "man" so that this is not about Adam but about other people, and whether the word "Berith" should be translated as "law," in which case no mention of a covenant would be made even here.

Adam means the first man here.

To the first, I answer: Although the word "Adam" could be translated as "man," and it often is, it does not follow that it must be translated as such here. Those who claim otherwise must provide evidence, and

they will not find any. We believe the word "Adam" to be the proper name of the first man in this passage. Our reasons are as follows:

(a) If we were to translate it as "man," the force of the passage would be lost because the words "as Adam" are used here not to diminish but to emphasize the magnitude of the sin. What power of intensification or even sense would that have? "They have transgressed the covenant, just like other men who are allies." For if they broke a covenant, they must have been part of it. That is, "They have transgressed the covenant, just like they and other co-allies do." This truly makes no sense. Therefore, "Adam" here means the first man.

(b) The Holy Scripture (often in the first book of Moses) in Deuteronomy 32:8, 1 Chronicles 1:1, uses the word "Adam" as the proper name of the first man, and we find it particularly in the same context as here. In Job 31:33, "If I covered my transgressions as Adam," explicit reference is made to concealing Adam's sin. So, why not translate "Adam" as "Adam" here, referring to the first man who committed such a sin or a similar type of sin?

(c) In the original Hebrew text, there is no argument against considering it as a proper name. With a proper name, there can be no hemphaticum, a sign of emphasis. However, when "Adam" means "man," it is often found with such an "h." Now, here there is no such "h," which would be especially appropriate if it meant "other men" because the word "Adam" has great emphasis here.

(d) The matter is true of Adam: he was in a covenant, as we have seen earlier. He broke the covenant; therefore, we should interpret it as referring to Adam unless some other necessity compels us to understand it as referring to someone else.

(e) It fits very well here. God intends to show the magnitude of the sin of Judah and Ephraim by tracing it back to its origin and example for imitation. Their sin was not only evil in itself but also had an evil origin, making it all the more sinful. Just as David magnified his sin in Psalm 51, this covenant violation was a sin that, by its very nature, originated in Adam's covenant breach and was therefore all the more heinous. Adam, who had an abundance of physical and spiritual blessings, recklessly, heedlessly, and treacherously broke the covenant. They followed in the likeness of Adam's transgression by faithlessly breaking God's covenant, even though God had blessed them so abundantly in the flesh and had given them His Word and all the means of grace for their souls. Thus, the words "like Adam" refer to Adam's first covenant breach, which is brought up here to magnify the sins of Judah and Ephraim.

Berith does not mean law.

XIII. The second argument lacks substance, namely that "Berith" could be translated as "law." We respond that the ability to translate it as such does not lead to that conclusion. Furthermore, I deny that the word "Berith" ever means "law." I have not come across any examples of it meaning "law" so far. However, I do find that it is called a covenant with regard to the law as a rule of the covenant, but it itself, to the best of my knowledge, never means "law." Therefore, it remains "covenant" here, and a covenant transgressed like Adam's. Consequently, it is evident that there was a covenant between God and Adam.

Reflect on this covenant.

XIV. Ponder this often to realize the blissful state in which God had placed the human race and, consequently, you, in terms of your nature. Such perfect, fitting, and even lovable conditions! Such

glorious promises, and all within a covenant with the supremely glorious and infinitely good God! The end of it cannot be fathomed. Proceed from there to the breaking of the covenant, which was so needless, reckless, and willful. What a detestable act! Move on to the righteousness of God and approve of it in punishing and rejecting such covenant breakers. Magnify your inherited and actual sins by contemplating the glory of this covenant. This beautiful covenant is now broken, and an unconverted person, not yet transferred into the covenant of grace, remains in that very covenant of works. Therefore, every time they sin, they break this covenant again, and thus they fall under the curse and increase it.

Now, turn away from this covenant of works because it is broken, and salvation cannot be obtained through it. This admonition is necessary because even the children of God sometimes focus on their works and become either encouraged or disheartened by them. The unconverted still want to do something; they think they can make amends through prayer and repentance, but they will find themselves deceived by this path. Cherish the covenant of grace, turn to the Mediator of this better covenant, enter into this covenant, and consider the first man as dead.

Chapter 4

On the Breaking of the Covenant of Works

The fact that Adam sinned and thus broke the Covenant of Works requires no further proof than the sinful state of all people, which is

evident, and the Scriptures, which make it known everywhere.

However, the question arises: When did he fall? The man, so wonderfully created and standing in such a blissful covenant with his God, likely did not remain in that holy and happy state for very long, but the exact duration is unwritten and therefore unknown. Nevertheless, it is evident that he did not fall immediately on the day of his creation. Here's why:

1. The seventh day is connected to the sixth day just as the previous days are linked together, without any intervening event or mention of the fall, the devil, or humanity. The division inserted in the chapter does not alter the substance of the narrative; chapters were not set by the holy writers but were added for the sake of memory and instruction of others.
2. The fall is described as occurring after the seventh day because, after Genesis 1 and 2 recount the first seven days and all that transpired on each, Genesis 3 subsequently describes the fall.
3. When the sixth day ended, everything was still very good. Genesis 1:31 states, "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good." It was evening, and it was morning, the sixth day.
4. When God saw humanity's sin, the Lord regretted that He had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved Him to His heart (Genesis 6:6). However, on the seventh day, the Lord rested, which means He ceased from creating new creatures, beheld all His work with satisfaction, delighted in His works, speaking in human terms, and found refreshment in them (Exodus 31:17): "Because the LORD made heaven and earth in six days and rested on the seventh day." This indicates that humanity did not fall either before or on the seventh day.

5. It is also inconceivable that humanity, upon opening their eyes to the world, would immediately fall and have no time to delight in God, rejoice in their holy and glorious state, glorify God for it, and have no time to experience their blessed state and reflect upon it after the fall. From the above, it can be inferred that God allowed humanity some time to experience the good, so it was only after the seventh day that humanity fell. However, the exact number of days, weeks, or months is unknown.

By the Temptation of the Devil

II. After a large number of angels had sinned and become devils, the devil set his sights on Adam and Eve to bring about their downfall. He aimed to prevent them from glorifying God, whom he had developed a gruesome hatred for because God had cast them out and forever excluded them from His grace.

The devil first targeted Eve, likely when she was alone and possibly near the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He seduced her, and she, being deceived, although not yet aware of it, also seduced her husband Adam. It was not out of love for his wife, but rather due to her seduction that Adam was deceived. It was only then that their eyes were opened, as recorded in Genesis 3:7. Thus, the devil was the instigating cause of the fall, which is why he is referred to as the murderer of humanity from the beginning and the liar, as stated in John 8:44.

Using a Serpent

III. To accomplish his deceitful scheme, the devil employed a serpent, believing it to be a suitable instrument. He spoke through the serpent to Eve. He did not speak invisibly, create a speaking voice in the air, or directly communicate with Eve's soul. Instead, he spoke

through the serpent, which he had taken possession of. This entire event should not be viewed metaphorically or as a mere allegory or imaginative story. Neither did the devil present himself as a phantom in the likeness of a serpent. It is an authentic and factual account, with both the devil and the serpent actively involved. The serpent was indeed a real, non-rational creature. This is evident for the following reasons:

(a) The narrative in Genesis 3:1 states, "Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field...", and she said to the woman.

(b) Furthermore, in verse 14, it is affirmed, "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle." It is undeniable that the serpent was a non-rational animal, and thus, it could not engage in clear and intelligent speech. Therefore, it is certain that a rational creature spoke through the serpent, and this rational creature was evil and sinful. It could have been no one other than the devil, who is often referred to in Scripture as a serpent, dragon, or ancient serpent (Revelation 20:2). These titles identify him with the serpent's role in the fall. For instance, 2 Corinthians 11:3 states, "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve." In Hebrews 2:14, it is written, "That through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil."

The Method Not Described in Detail

IV. The method of deception, much like Moses' concise account of everything that happened in the first world, is not elaborated upon in the Scriptures. Therefore, all speculations about the method—whether the devil spoke to Eve once or multiple times, used other means to interact with Eve, or presented himself as a messenger of God declaring the end of the testing period and permitting them to eat—are mere conjecture. Whether he came as a teacher and friend,

offering well-intentioned advice and revealing the hidden benefits of eating from that tree, or whether he came as an enemy of God, painting a negative image of God, trying to deter Eve from what would make her happy and like Him, is also unknown. Other pretexts and arguments that he may have used are not disclosed. I prefer not to dwell on these matters to avoid the risk of misleading you with plausible but baseless theories. It is safer not to desire knowledge that the wisest and greatest Teacher did not reveal. By doing so, you will avoid many temptations.

Eve Deceived, Adam Also Deceived

V. I am certain of the following:

- Eve knew that animals, including serpents, did not possess rational understanding and speech.
- Eve was unaware of the angels' fall.
- Eve could deduce that something extraordinary was happening.
- Eve may have desired a higher level of knowledge and communion with God, as promised in the Covenant of Works.
- She may have been curious about gaining greater understanding of natural things, which could be achieved through experience.
- Eve did not eat from the tree out of ignorance; she knew she should not eat from it or touch it.
- Her desire for knowledge led her to eat, and she was not forced; it was an act of her own free will.
- Eve did not immediately recognize the deception but noticed it only after she had deceived Adam.
- Contrary to what the Apostle Paul says in 1 Timothy 2:14, Adam was not deceived by the serpent but was deceived by Eve. Thus, he was deceived after her.

- Had Adam remained steadfast, only Eve would have borne the punishment. However, because Adam also sinned, the entire human nature, the entire human race, stands guilty, as stated by Paul in Romans 5:12: "Through one man sin entered the world." Paul refers not only to Eve's sin but to the sin of the human race, which consisted solely of Adam and Eve, who were united in marriage. Although they were united, he particularly points to Adam's sin, as he was the first man and the sole origin of both Eve and the entire human race.

Is a Terrible Sin

VI. Eating from that tree was not a minor sin, even though the fruit itself may have seemed insignificant. It was, in fact, a dreadful transgression encompassing the violation of the entire law, of love, of obedience, and of the covenant. It bore the fruit of destruction for both Adam and all his descendants. This sin is aggravated: (a) Because it was committed against God Himself, whom they knew in His majesty and glory and who had bound them to Himself through countless blessings. (b) Because it was perpetrated by such a holy man who possessed the strength to resist it and withstand all temptations. (c) Because it revolved around such a small and light matter, concerning only one tree when they had abundance in the splendid garden. (d) Because their salvation or damnation depended on it. Therefore, this act is aptly named: Romans 5:12 calls it "sin," verse 14 labels it an "offense," verse 15 names it a "trespass," and verse 19 describes it as "disobedience."

A Confluence of Many Sins

VII. When we examine the sin as a whole, now that it is completed, it is a confluence of all sins. Not only because one who commits any sin is guilty of all, as every sin involves a departure from the Lawgiver

and a violation of the law, but also because many specific sinful actions are involved.

Someone may ask: "Which one was the first?"

I answer that a sin is not so much about time as it is about order. The first sin was not in the timing of the outward act; rather, several sins mingled within it. Therefore, the first sin is not to be sought in the outward act, nor in the emotions, passions, or inclinations, nor even in the will. In a perfect nature, the will and emotions are subject to reason; they follow and do not precede it.

The first sin was believing the devil's words.

The first sin is found in the intellect, which was misled by specious reasoning to judge that they would not die. It was a belief that this particular tree had the power to make one wise, which they could desire without sin. The tree bore the name of knowledge, which they found appealing. It was about good and evil, with the word "evil" holding a hidden meaning. The serpent seized the opportunity provided by these names, making it seem as though profound secrets were concealed in these words. The intellect, keenly drawn both by the allure of wisdom and by the tree that could provide it, whether as a means or as a cause, disregarded the prohibition against eating and the threat of death. The application of judgment, presenting the idea that it would be beneficial to eat from the tree, stirred the desire to obtain wisdom. This was accompanied by the observation that the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye (Genesis 3:6).

Since the intellect was deceived not by reasons derived from the nature of the tree and its fruit but by the words of the serpent and the words of the woman to Adam, the matter, namely, not dying but becoming wise through eating from that tree, was established

through faith. Faith involves holding something as true based on someone else's assertion. Thus, the first sin was believing the serpent, that they would not die but become wise. This encompassed within it the failure to believe God, who had threatened death for eating. Thus, being unbelieving, they became disobedient, gave in, and ate. Because they believed the serpent, they were deceived and led astray. This sin of being deceived and led astray is expressed in 1 Timothy 2:14 and 1 Corinthians 11:3. Thus, they deceived Adam. Therefore, the first sin was not pride, aspiring to be like God, nor was it rebellion and disobedience, nor was it gluttony, but unbelief.

Had the Ability to Remain Upright

VIII. Someone may ask: How was it possible for a perfect human, who had no inclination toward sin, to fall into sin?

I answer:

1. First, tell me how the angels, who had a higher degree of perfection, could have sinned. If you say, "I know they sinned but not how," then you have answered your own question about Adam. It is certain that Adam sinned, and it is also certain that he had no predisposition to sin within him:

- (a) Because that would make God the cause of sin,

- (b) Such an inherent inclination to sin cannot coexist with being created in God's image in perfection, and

- (c) Such an inclination would contradict the Tenth Commandment.

2. God created man as a rational being, endowing him with reason and free will. This gave him the capacity to govern his actions and guard against external temptations and deceptions. However, he allowed himself to be deceived by the devil in the manner mentioned in paragraph 7. Let us be more concerned with how to escape from sin, given that we are in it, than with how we got into it.

IX. The knowledge that God knew of the fall from eternity and decided to allow it is not only a lesson in God's omniscience and the doctrine of God's decrees (Chapter 5), but it is also evident from the fact that God from eternity ordained a Redeemer for humanity to rescue them from sin, namely the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter calls Him the Lamb foreknown before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20).

The Fall Did Not Occur without God's Providence

The question is whether Adam sinned independently or autonomously of God and whether the fall occurred without and outside of God's providence.

I answer, absolutely not. We have discussed these matters extensively in Chapter 9. There, we demonstrated that no creature can be independent of God, neither in existence nor in operation. God's cooperation determines and motivates man to each particular act, supporting and accompanying him in it. Thus, when God flows into the mind, will, and works of man, as far as they are natural movements, He moves man in harmony with his nature, which means He causes man to act by his free will. In this way, even though God supports him through His cooperation, man is determined and guided by himself. When he sins, he misuses this cooperation and fails to act in accordance with the law that has been established for

him. The same happened in the case of Adam; God had given him sufficient strength to resist all temptations. God did not prevent him from sinning, although He could have, but He was not obligated to. God did not withdraw those given powers from him, but instead, He allowed the perfect man to act according to his own free will. Thus, the blame lies with man and not with God. If anyone, with their limited and obscure understanding, wishes to further explore this matter, perhaps intending to accuse God and declare man innocent by holding God responsible and attributing an inherent inclination to sin to man or asserting independence from God, then I say that they will receive a great delusion as a reward for their presumption. They will sink into foolish and sinful thoughts against God. Therefore, I advise you to conclude with what we have said and to remember that the thoughts and ways of the Lord are not like ours. God's ways are holy, whether we understand them or not.

Through the Fall, the Covenant Was Broken

X. Having sinned, man broke that glorious covenant and forfeited the promise. Therefore, it is now impossible for the law to justify him and place him in the right and possession of eternal life because, through the flesh, it has become powerless (Romans 8:3).

Nevertheless, that covenant remains in full force and binds the entire human race (to the extent that they have not been transferred to the covenant of grace) to obedience and punishment. Similarly, the promise remains conditional upon obedience: "Do this and you shall live." Even though man cannot attain the promise because he does not fulfill the condition, the covenant still inherently contains the promise.

This is evident:

1. It is true that God, by His nature, binds the creature to obedience, and by its own nature, the creature is bound, even without a covenant. However, God created man within the covenant and imprinted the knowledge and approval of it in his nature, so that he has never existed without that covenant from the moment of his creation. Therefore, human nature remains in its original relationship to the covenant.
2. Among humans, covenants persist even after the initial transgression. Learned kings and rulers do not just recall the first transgression with others with whom they have made a covenant, but they also demonstrate how many times that established covenant has been violated. A woman who commits adultery, for example, remains bound by the covenant with her husband and is not released from it. However, each time she commits adultery after the first act, she repeats her adultery and breaks the covenant. From this, it is evident that the transgression of a covenant does not absolve the transgressor from the covenant. Thus, the covenant of works remains even after the transgression.
3. The nature of all human beings, as well as Scripture, affirms the existence of the law, promise, threats, and consent. Therefore, the covenant of works remains. Every person knows that there is a God and is aware of the law written in their hearts. They approve of the law, acknowledging its goodness and their obligation to obey it. They recognize the promise of reward if they obey and the threat of punishment if they transgress. This is evident from Romans 2:14-15 and Romans 1:32. Since such a rational law exists, so does the covenant. Thus, the sinner remains under that covenant because he is a debtor to fulfill the entire law (Galatians 5:3), and the law has dominion over a man

as long as he lives (Romans 7:1). Therefore, every time he sins against the law, he breaks the covenant.

Until He Enters the Covenant of Grace

XI. However, if, with God's consent, he departs from the covenant of works and enters into the covenant of grace, he is no longer under that covenant, as Romans 6:14 states, "For you are not under law but under grace." For when the first man died, the woman was set free from the law of her husband (Romans 7:2). The law is no longer a condition of the covenant of works for them but a delightful rule of life. When they sin, they do not break the covenant of works because they are no longer under it. Instead, they transgress the lovely rule given to them in the covenant of grace. It is the regenerate part of them that does not sin, but rather, it is the flesh within them. Even though sins deserve punishment by their nature, they do not come upon them because the Mediator has taken them upon Himself and paid the debt.

If someone might think that because the promises have been nullified by the first sin and the punishment is present, the covenant of works can no longer exist afterward, let it be answered:

(a) The covenant inherently contains both promises and threats, and thus, the covenant remains, even if the promises and threats actually constituted the covenant itself.

(b) Neither promises nor threats define the nature of the covenant; instead, it is the mutual engagement within it that defines it. As long as that engagement remains, the covenant endures.

(c) There are degrees of reward and punishment; therefore, even if this objection were granted, the covenant could still continue.

(d) Man remains bound to love God, believe in God, set God as his highest good, and seek God through the path of obedience. No one who wishes to be called a Christian would dare to deny this. Consequently, the covenant that obligates man to these duties also remains.

From this, it follows: Loss of the Image

XII. With the covenant broken by Adam and Eve, various sinful and painful miseries followed:

1. Immediately, Adam was stripped of the image of God, which begins to be restored through regeneration (Colossians 3:10; Ephesians 4:24). This indicates that the image was lost, and it manifested itself immediately through shame.
2. Shame: Due to shame about their physical nakedness, they dared not come naked into the presence of God (Genesis 3:7, 10). They also felt shame before themselves and each other. This did not necessarily imply impure desires in these married individuals, but their conscience showed them that their bodies were too indecent to be seen. Therefore, they attempted to cover themselves using fig leaves, which were likely longer than those found in our regions and Spain, probably hanging down from the chin to the knees, as they still do in Cyclone. They attached these leaves together as best they could and used them to cover themselves.
3. Alongside this, a sense of dread in their conscience emerged. The Lord revealed Himself through the cool of the day, which often occurs in many lands, particularly in hot regions, around sunrise to temper the heat. Whether the Lord had a unique way of revealing Himself to Adam around that time, which Adam had now come to recognize through experience, or whether

something extraordinary accompanied it that made Adam aware of the Lord's coming, we do not know. However, since Adam and Eve had now become aware of their committed sin, they also feared the punishment for that sin. The presence of God, which had previously brought them joy, now filled them with fear. Consequently, they fled and hid among the dense trees (Genesis 3:8).

4. Alongside this, sinful self-love was revealed as they sought to excuse themselves and showed unloving behavior toward each other. Adam accused his wife, showing a lack of love for her (Genesis 3:12). Job alludes to this when he says, "If I have concealed my transgressions as Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom" (Job 31:33). Eve excused herself by claiming that she had been deceived alone and shifted the blame onto the serpent.
5. This was followed by a verdict:

(a) The serpent, which had been deceived, was cursed above all cattle, etc. (Genesis 3:14).

(b) The devil, the cause of the temptation, received a judgment: "The seed of the woman will crush your head" (Genesis 3:15). This was fulfilled by Christ (Hebrews 2:14).

6. After announcing the covenant of grace to Adam and Eve through the Seed, not of man but of the woman (v. 15), which is Christ, who would come to break the work of the devil (1 John 3:8; the fruit of Mary's womb (Luke 1:42) and born of a woman (Galatians 4:4)), the Lord intended that man would always be aware of sin. He foretold the chastening miseries that would continue, which, in unconverted dying individuals, would become punishments:

(a) Special plagues that would especially come upon the female sex include: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3:16).

(b) Special punishments imposed by God on the male sex are as follows (Genesis 3:17-19): "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread."

(c) The common punishment that both man and woman would be subject to is death (v. 19): "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground."

XIII. One might think: There is not a single word here about eternal damnation, so it seems that it was neither threatened nor deserved. I reply:

1. We have shown above that eternal damnation was indeed threatened for sin, and we will demonstrate below that it is deserved for all sins committed by unconverted individuals.
2. The reason why eternal damnation is not mentioned here is that the covenant of grace, announced to Adam and Eve through the Seed of the woman (Christ) in verse 15, preceded the pronouncement of sorrows upon them in verses 16-19. Consequently, they were already exempt from damnation, and these sorrows were imposed as chastisements. I speak concerning Adam and Eve.

If someone says: It does not seem that Adam and Eve were saved by Christ, and Hebrews 11:4 seems to suggest otherwise, where Abel is presented as the first believer, just as he is also presented as the first righteous person in Matthew 23:35.

I reply:

1. While Abel is mentioned in the cited texts, he is not called the first righteous person or the first believer. Therefore, this does not exclude Adam, any more than when Abraham is called the father of believers, which does not exclude earlier believers.
2. Abel is mentioned in these texts because he is the first person contrasted with the ungodly, both in relation to his offering, which was better than Cain's, and because he was the first martyr.
3. That Adam believed in the promised Seed is evident from:

(a) The nature of the established covenant, which cannot exist without a covenanting party. If Adam was not a party to it, the covenant would have been without a party until Abel's time and even until the birth of Seth, who was born one hundred and thirty years after Adam's creation. When God established the covenant with Abraham, He included Himself in it. Would God establish the covenant of grace under the name of the Seed of the woman, which would crush the serpent's head, and not include Adam and Eve in it, leaving the covenant powerless for so many years without a covenanting party? If God announced it to Adam and Eve, would He not bring them into it?

(b) It is also evident from the enmity between man and the serpent. Where there is enmity with the devil, there is peace with God.

(c) Eve immediately set her eyes on this promise when she bore Cain, saying, "I have acquired a man from the Lord."

(d) Consider the godly upbringing and faithful instruction of their children, which led Abel to faith.

Clothing After the Fall

XIV. With the covenant of grace established with Adam and Eve and various adversities imposed upon them in this life, along with temporary death as chastisement, the Lord clothed them in more suitable garments than those made of fig leaves. He clothed them with tunics of skins. Before the fall, Adam did not kill animals for food, as he had been given seed-bearing plants and fruit-bearing trees for nourishment. I cannot say where these skins came from, and there is no advantage in knowing whether they were from sacrificed animals. In any case, God made them tunics of skins, clothing them to cover and warm them, but with a sharp rebuke for breaking the covenant of works and their attempt at transgression, saying, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil!" (Genesis 3:22).

Banishment from the Garden and Exclusion from the Tree of Life

XV. Because the covenant of works had been broken and rendered powerless to attain salvation through it, and because the covenant of grace had been established in its place for believers, God did not want man to long for the tree of life, which was now powerless. Therefore, the Lord wanted them to turn away from it and place all their hope and comfort in the promised Seed of the woman. Thus, the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden. So, He drove the man out and placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden and a

flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever (Genesis 3:23-24). That there was no power in the tree of life to preserve life forever, we have shown above. Moreover, as a sacrament of the covenant of works, it was no longer useful because the promise could not be obtained through the broken covenant. But why then is access to the tree guarded? So that Adam would not approach to eat from it. It is possible that the devil had given Eve a false impression of the tree of life, or he might have deceived man into thinking that if he were to eat from the tree of life, he would not die. The purpose was to draw man away from the covenant of grace and back into the covenant of works to seek salvation through it or that man might develop such a desire through a mistaken motive and imagination. God wanted to prevent this, and He not only forbade him to eat from the tree but also prevented him from even approaching it. Thus, the covenant of works was broken. It would be advantageous for the children of God to turn away from it because there is still a desire for the covenant of works. This is evident in unbelief when one falls into sin, as if all promises had been nullified, in wanting to possess something within oneself before coming to Christ, and in resting quietly on one's own works, having greater confidence when one behaves reasonably. Now, all rest and comfort must be placed in Christ in the covenant of grace, seeking holiness as a principle of salvation from Him.

Chapter 5

On Sin, Both Inherited and Actual

Adam, having broken the covenant, not only became sinful himself but also all his descendants with him. By sin, we do not mean the punishment for sin, nor the offering for sin, although they are also referred to as sin; but it is the being and doing contrary to the pleasure of God. In Scripture, it is called apostasy, deviation, wickedness, disobedience, unrighteousness, transgression, faithlessness, rebellion, and so on. Each specific sin has its own name.

II. Sin is not something substantial or self-existent because all existence is created by God and, in that sense, good. Also, the substance of man has not changed in essence due to sin, but sin has infected and corrupted the qualities of the faculties or powers of the soul concerning morality. The actual nature of sin does not reside in the willingness and deliberate consent of the will to the extent that it would not be considered sin if the will's active consent were absent. This notion is sometimes used to deny original sin. However:

(a) Lot committed incest, and Paul blasphemed Christ and persecuted the churches, yet neither had the active consent of their wills to commit incest or blasphemy because they did so unknowingly.

(b) The coveting prohibited in the tenth commandment, which is a sin (Romans 7:7), arises in the soul before the active consent of the will.

(c) Indeed, all sins committed in ignorance, which are numerous (Psalm 19:13; Luke 12:48), are done without the active consent of the will because the will, in its consent, follows the applying judgment. However, if one takes the voluntary consent in its origin, then human nature and will are not opposed to sin but have a willing disposition toward it, even from the very beginning when one knows neither sin

nor immediate volition. Guilt, which is the obligation to punishment, is not the essence or nature of sin because it is a consequence of sin and can be removed while sin remains, as happens through Christ's atonement for the sins of the believers. Sin does not exist solely in actions but also in the disposition, in the deformity, lacking the qualities that should be present and having a form that should not be present.

Exists in unlawfulness.

III. However, the form and true nature of sin consist of "A-nomia," in lawlessness, disorder, unrighteousness, 1 John 3:4. Sin is unrighteousness. Whether it is in one's nature or actions regarding the law, sin is distinguished in terms of original sin and actual sin. It is called original sin because it passes from Adam to his descendants, who are born from him through natural generation, as if inherited. Christ is an exception since He came from Adam but not through natural generation. It is also called original sin because it originates from Adam and exists in humanity from its very beginning. The other type is called actual sin because it is committed through action, whether in thoughts, words, or deeds.

Original Sin.

IV. Original sin consists of: a. imputed guilt, b. inherent corruption.
a. Imputed guilt does not mean that due to inherent corruption, a person is worthy of being counted in the same state as Adam, as if they themselves had immediately committed the same act as Adam. That is not the imputation of someone else's crime but of one's own sin. It is merely a comparison of various sins in various individuals and a comparison of different sins in terms of guilt and punishment. In this sense, our sinfulness can be compared both to the sins of other people and to Adam's sin. However, by imputed guilt, we mean

the imputation of the very first covenant breach that Adam committed. Denying or distorting this lays the foundation for denying inherited sin, all original sin, and consequently, the imputation of Christ's righteousness. Imputation occurs for one's personal crime, by which the person who commits the sin justly places themselves under the deserved and commensurate punishment. Or it occurs for the crime of another person with whom one has communion, and through that communion, one also shares in the same sin. The sin of someone with whom one has no communion whatsoever cannot justly be imputed.

It is not solely because Adam was the head of the human race. V. Communion with another person is of three kinds.

(a) Natural, such as between a father and his children.

(b) Civil, such as between a ruler and subjects.

(c) Voluntary, as in contracts and mutual obligations between a creditor, debtor, and surety. The last form of communion is not relevant here. The second, which is civil, cannot be solely applied in this context. While it is true that by God's ordination, Adam was the head of the human race even without his descendants needing to consent to it, saying that he, solely and exclusively considered as the head of the human race and sinning as such, would have brought all his descendants under eternal damnation, presents difficulties. This is because even after the fall, Adam continued to be the head of the human race just as he was before, and consequently, for the same reason, all the sins Adam committed after the fall should also be imputed to his descendants, as much as the first covenant breach. This is denied because the apostle speaks of one offense in Romans 5:18. Thus, the first form of communion, which is natural, remains. This, when solely and exclusively considered, cannot be applied here

either. It is true that all human beings have come from Adam as the progenitor of the human race and share the same exact nature as Adam. However, to say that Adam's sin is imputed to us solely because we share the same nature with Adam presents the same difficulty. This is because Adam is the father of all people, both before and after the fall, and they all share the same nature with him. Therefore, for the same reason, all of Adam's sins committed after the fall should affect all people just as much as the first covenant breach does, contrary to Romans 5:18. Why then would all the sins of our subsequent ancestors not affect us because we were also in their loins, and they are our ancestors just as much as Adam is? But it is said: "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father" (Ezekiel 18:20).

But because the human race was in the covenant of works.

VI. The communion with Adam consists in the fact that human nature, comprising only Adam at that time, was created in the covenant of works. Adam was not created first and then entered into a covenant of works at some later time; he was created in it. From the very moment of his existence, he was in it, and as soon as he formed a thought, he knew God and the covenant, and could not do otherwise than approve of it. Thus, the entire human nature and the human race in Adam were created in that covenant, just as all people are still born into that same covenant of works, as we have discussed earlier. Now, when Adam broke the covenant, it also broke the entire human nature, the entire human race. Therefore, it is just that this nature, this race, also comes under guilt, and that every person, as soon as they have the same nature, is imputed with the covenant breach and is considered worthy of damnation. From this, it is clear that only Adam's covenant breach, and not the subsequent sins of his descendants, is imputed to them. This is not merely because they

share the same nature but because they were created in Adam in the covenant of works, and they broke it in him.

Question: Whether Adam's act, the initial covenant breach, is imputed as guilty of the covenant breach to the entire human race, and thus, to every person naturally descended from him? Socinians and Mennonites deny it, asserting that Adam's sin harmed only him and did not affect his descendants. The Remonstrants lean toward this view. We firmly assert the opposite.

VII. That the covenant breach is justly imputed to all people is evident as follows:

1. From Romans 5:12, 15-18. Several reasons lie herein.

A. Verse 12: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned."

(1) Here, it does not say "he sinned" but "all sinned," which implies an action, not a quality, and thus, it cannot be applied to the corruption of nature or suggest that people become guilty of the same punishment through that corruption. Since an action is mentioned, the term "offense" is used in the following passages.

(2) This makes it clear that sin is the cause of death, even physical death. It did not come as a result of nature and would have affected humans even if they had not sinned. Refer to Chapter 10, paragraph 33, above.

(3) Consequently, it shows that infants must have sin before birth because they die. They do not commit actual sin (verse 14), so the only sin imputed to them is Adam's covenant breach.

(4) It is stated that "all sinned in him." In Greek: "πάντες ἥμαρτον ἐν αὐτῷ." These words have various meanings depending on the context and how they are applied. In this particular context, they mean "in him." For example, in Matthew 13:14, "ἐπ' αὐτοῖς ἐπ' αὐτοῖς" means "in them," where the possessed one is lying. In Acts 2:38, "ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι ἐπὶ τοῦ ὀνόματι" means "in the name of Jesus Christ." Hebrews 9:10 uses "ἐπὶ βρωμασί ἐπὶ βρομασί" to mean "in foods," and verse 17 says "ἐπὶ νεκροῖς ἐπὶ νεκροῖς" to mean "a testament is valid when people are dead." Similarly, here, "all sinned in him" implies that they sinned in relation to him as they were in him at that time. One might wonder if these words, "πάντες ἥμαρτον ἐν αὐτῷ," could be translated as "therefore" or "because," as they are in other verses. I answer that there is a preceding noun here, "ἄνθρωπος ἐν τῷ ἀνδρῶν ἑστέ" (man in the male gender), and the relative pronoun "ὃς" refers to it. Therefore, it should not be rendered in the neuter as "in that" or "because" but in the masculine as "in him," a man.

(5) It is also evident from the fact that the words "in welke allen gezondigd hebben" (in which all sinned) are given as a reason for Paul's statement that death came to all people through Adam's sin. Now, it is not a reason that death came to all people through Adam's sin because all people personally sinned, which would only prove that everyone had to die because they sinned. This is not the apostle's assertion. Instead, the apostle states that all people die through Adam's sin. Therefore, if they die through Adam's sin, there must be a connection to Adam's sin just as there is a connection to his punishment. The apostle establishes that connection with these words, "in welke zij allen gezondigd hebben" (in which all sinned). First, the apostle establishes the connection to Adam's punishment, and then he provides the reason for it, stating that they all sinned in him.

B. The imputation of Adam's covenant breach is also evident from verse 15. If, by the trespass of the one man, vs. 16, the guilt came from one sin leading to condemnation, vs. 17, if by the one man's offense death reigned through that one, vs. 18, then through one offense (guilt came) to all men for condemnation. It is clear that here, one single sin is spoken of, an act and not a condition, and it's attributed to one man, Adam, and through that one sin of that one man, guilt and condemnation came upon all people. This requires no further proof; these are the very words of the text.

How does this happen? Not through

(a) imitation, for no one witnessed Adam's sin, and little children certainly did not sin in the likeness of Adam's transgression, vs. 14. They are also human beings. Imitation does not make anyone guilty of the personal sin of the one they imitate but rather of their own personal sin that they commit through imitation.

(b) Nor through the corruption of nature, which one inherits from Adam for the same reason; for it does not bring guilt for the sin from which this corruption is derived, but it brings guilt through its own personal corruption.

(c) Nor through immediate personal participation and conspiracy with Adam, for they were not yet there, and even then, it would not be one offense of one, but offenses of many.

(d) But guilt leading to condemnation from the one offense of one Adam comes to all through imputation because they were created in Adam in the covenant.

C. Beyond all dispute, it is clear that the apostle in this chapter constantly contrasts Adam and Christ. Adam is the cause of guilt and

punishment for all who are in him; Christ is the cause of redemption and salvation for all who are in Him. Now, justification by Christ occurs through imputation, as will be shown in its place, so in contrast, the guilt leading to condemnation comes upon all people through the imputation of Adam's covenant breach.

VIII. 2. The imputation of guilt is also evident from 1 Corinthians 15:22, "As in Adam all die." Here, it does not merely state that all people die, nor that they die in their fathers and grandfathers, but that they all die in Adam. To die in someone is to have the guilt of death and damnation in them and to derive it from them. If all people die, they have all also sinned because the wages of sin is death, Rom. 6:23. Furthermore, if all people die in Adam, they have also sinned in him. They are punished and have sinned in the same way. If all people are justly subjected to the threatened punishments, as in "in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die," then they are truly guilty of the same sin for which the punishment was threatened. Now, it is evident that all people are subjected to the threatened punishment and not only die but also bear the imposed miseries because of the covenant breach mentioned in Genesis 3. Therefore, they are guilty of that sin. They have not personally committed it with Adam, and one cannot be said to have sinned in someone through imitation or through inheriting corruption from someone. Therefore, it remains firmly established that all people, while dying in Adam, have sinned in him through imputation.

3. If not, then all people should be born perfect. IX. If all people were not guilty of Adam's covenant breach, and thus, the sin was not rightfully imputed to them, then every person should be born as perfect as Adam, adorned with the image of God. This is because the soul is immediately created by God, and God creates a rational creature that is innocent according to His holy nature.

What would the subsequent generations have to do with Adam then, each existing individually and all standing in the same perfection as Adam? Everyone could remain in that perfection, so why is it that all people, without exception, are in the same sinful state? If they could not have received corruption from Adam, because they would have been born perfect, and this corruption could not have been passed down through the body because it is considered merely as a body in its nature and not as a subject of sin. Nor could it have come through the soul because it is created by God, and if there were no guilt, they would be born holy, adorned with the image of God. So, I ask, where does the sin come from? But because humans are born with corrupted nature and in a sinful state, it is certain that they are guilty of the covenant breach in Adam.

4. Punishments do indeed come upon children. X. Consider that the sins of fathers can indeed be visited upon their children, and they may be punished for their fathers' sins. See this: Exodus 20:5, "visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation." Matthew 23:35, "so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah." Examples of this include Achan, Joshua 7:24, 25; Jeroboam, 1 Kings 14:9, 10; Ahab, 1 Kings 21:21; Manasseh, 2 Kings 24:3. Additionally, consider the proof to the contrary: Levi gave tithes while still in the loins of Abraham. It is true that the children themselves were sinful and therefore deserving of all punishments, but it is stated here that they were punished, specifically with temporal punishments, for the sins of their forefathers. This is even more applicable to humans, who, being all in the loins of Adam, were created in the covenant of works in him.

Objection 1.

XI. God does not want judges on earth to punish the son for the father's crime, and He declares that He does not do it Himself either. See Deuteronomy 24:16, "Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. Each one shall be put to death for his own sin." Ezekiel 18:20, "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son." Therefore, Adam's sin cannot be imputed to his descendants.

Answer.

1. Deuteronomy 24:16 is a law that God gives to humans; therefore, there is no implication for God's right. The text speaks of offenses against the law, not of covenant breach; there is no direct correlation between the two. The text refers to sins of individual persons, whereas Adam was the head of the Covenant established with the whole human race. Just as this is the sin of the entire human race, for apart from them both, there were no other humans, and he contained the whole race within himself, so the same race bears the punishment of its own sin.
2. Ezekiel 18:20 also speaks of specific sins committed by individual persons, so it cannot be applied to Adam and his descendants as standing in him in the Covenant. The text speaks of adult children who did not follow in the footsteps of their parents; God convicts them of having indeed done so and therefore being punished for their own sins of the same kind. It is undeniable that God punishes children for their parents' sins, as seen in the flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the children of Eli. God Himself expressly says: "visiting the

iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation," Exodus 20:5.

XII. Thus, we have seen original sin regarding the imputed guilt. b. Now, we move on to inherent corruption.

Inherent corruption. Inherent corruption consists of the absence of the image of God and a sinful disposition or deformity. The absence of the image of God. Man lacks the image of God not merely by negation, or not having original righteousness, but by a deprivation that presupposes a prior opposite disposition. All people, having sinned in Adam, are deprived of the image of God, so that every person is born devoid of all spiritual light, love, truth, life, and holiness. All glory and sanctity have been removed from humanity. See this: Romans 3:23, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 7:18, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells." Ephesians 2:1, "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Ephesians 4:18, "having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God."

2. It is also evident that the image of God is restored through regeneration because what is restored was lost, and what is given was not present before. See Colossians 3:10, "and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him." Ephesians 4:23, 24, "and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."

XIII. Original sin does not only consist in the absence of original righteousness but also in possessing an opposite deformity. Just as an illness is not merely the absence of a healthy state and free

circulation of blood but also an ailment of character and movement, so it is in the spiritual realm.

In this regard, original sin is referred to as the old man (Romans 6:6), flesh (John 3:6), sin (Romans 7:11), the law of sin (Romans 7:23), lust (Romans 7:7; Galatians 5:17), uncleanness (Colossians 3:5), filthiness (James 1:21), defilement (2 Corinthians 7:1). This original sin is present in all people who naturally descend from Adam, from the moment of their conception, with no exceptions, not even Mary. While the children of God are born again, they are not perfectly regenerated in this life, and much of the corruption still remains in them.

XIV. Question: Whether all people, due to Adam's fall, are born in a state of deformity and corruption in their nature from conception and birth, and thus come into the world as sinners? Socinians and Mennonites deny this entirely. When confronted with the corruption evident in young children before they can learn it through imitation of bad examples, they explain it away by saying that there is something, but they do not want to acknowledge it as sin. The Remonstrants downplay original sin and lean toward denial. We firmly answer the question: yes.

It is in all people from birth.

XIV. That all people are in a state of deformity and corruption in their nature from the moment of their conception is evident:

1. From clear scriptural texts that demonstrate this in various ways:

- (a) Psalm 51:7, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." David is not speaking of his

mother's sin; there is no evidence of that. The original text does not suggest it any more than our translation. David is speaking of himself; "I was." He humbles himself before God for his committed sin and, in order to view that sin in its nature and magnitude, he ascends to the origin of that act. He confesses that it was not a passing act but that it arose from an evil disposition of the heart. He had this evil disposition from his very conception, and thus from his nature. Therefore, nothing but impurity could spring from that corrupt disposition, and he was naturally repugnant in both nature and deeds. He was a man like other men, and other men like him, all coming from the same blood, and therefore lying in the same deformity. So, every person must say this about themselves.

(b) Add to this those verses that show it is impossible to be born in any way other than as a sinner. Job 14:4, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? There is not one." John 3:6, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Adam was a sinner, and therefore, he could only beget a son in his own image, not in the image of God, Genesis 5:3. All people are sinners, and no cause can produce anything nobler than itself. Therefore, a sinner begets a sinner. Matthew 7:18, "A bad tree cannot produce good fruit."

(c) These texts also serve to declare that people are inherently wicked in thoughts and actions from their early youth. Genesis 6:5, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Genesis 8:21, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Such evil thoughts are a clear sign that the source is evil, James 3:11.

(d) The apostle confirms this, Ephesians 2:5, "We were by

nature children of wrath, like the others." Behold, all people are children of wrath by nature. Thus, they are not children of wrath solely due to their sinful deeds, but wrath already rests upon them earlier and has their nature as its object and reason as soon as they possess that nature. Because they have that nature, they are children of wrath. No one is an object of God's wrath except because of sin. Therefore, by nature, humans are sinful, guilty in Adam, and deformed in themselves.

2. Corruption manifests itself in infants. XVI. Experience teaches us that humanity is naturally corrupt. We observe in infants, before they use their understanding, irritability and anger because they do not get their way. They also display vindictiveness before understanding language and before anyone can teach them what it means. They become content when they see others scold or harm each other, even expressing delight through laughter. So, when we say, because we cannot deny it, "there is something," I say: that something is sin (Romans 7:7, 8). These are rational creatures, and a law is given to them that forbids anger and vindictiveness. Furthermore, even if a child were raised without any exposure to evil examples, even in a wilderness, and only in the company of a holy person, they would naturally commit all kinds of sins, as the experience of some children has shown.
3. Children die before birth. XVII. It is known that children, even before birth, die. Now, death is a punishment for sin, as evidenced in Romans 5:12, as shown above, so it is certain that they are sinful.
4. Need for Christ. It also becomes evident that children need Christ because without Christ, there is no salvation. Now, all

who need a Redeemer are sinners, so children, for whom circumcision serves as clear evidence. It signified the removal of the body of sin (Colossians 2:11). The necessity of regeneration also demonstrates this because if the first birth were good, the second would not be necessary, yet it is necessary for salvation (John 3:5).

Objection 1.

XVIII. All sin must be committed with knowledge and consent of the free will. Original sin does not happen with knowledge and consent of the will, so it is not sin. Answer: I reply that it is not true that all sin occurs with awareness and consent of the will. This is not only contrary to Scripture but also against it. There is a difference between being against one's will and occurring without a conscious act of the will. The first sin was committed with the will of the whole nature.

Objection 2.

1 Corinthians 7:14 states, "For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy." So, children are without original sin. Answer: This text explicitly declares all children unclean and, therefore, having original sin. However, it states that the children of believers are holy, not with a holiness that is the image of God, but by their separation from other children and their inclusion in the Church and the covenant of grace. Therefore, they should be considered as true covenant members unless they demonstrate otherwise (Ezekiel 16:21).

Objection 3.

Children are innocent; they know neither their right nor left hand (Jonah 4:11). They are blameless (Psalm 106:38). They have neither done good nor evil (Romans 9:11). The man born blind was born blind neither for his own sins nor those of his parents (John 9:3). Answer: These texts speak of sinful deeds, not the sinfulness of nature, which begins to manifest itself even in the first acts. The man born blind and his parents were not without sin, perfectly holy, as the Lord Jesus does not say, but they were no greater sinners than others, and therefore he was not born blind because of their sins.

How corruption is inherited.

XIX. Thus, we have seen original sin, both in terms of imputed guilt and inherent corruption. Alongside this, a question arises: How is Adam's original sin transmitted to his descendants? We have explained how guilt is imputed in paragraph 6 and several following paragraphs, leaving the question of the corruption of nature and how it is inherited. One might think it cannot occur through the body because the body is not the actual subject of sin. It also cannot occur through the soul because the soul is created by God and, therefore, inherently good. It cannot occur through both body and soul together, and thus through generation, because the soul is not generated, and because it is not present in either part, it cannot come from the whole, and cannot proceed from it.

I reply:

1. Why do we need to know how sin is transmitted when we clearly see from Scripture and experience that it is inherited? A fool can ask more questions than many wise people can answer. Tell me, how is the body formed with all its parts? How is the soul united with the body? How can making sounds with the tongue convey non-physical things to others? How does the tide rise and fall at

its appointed time? You may say, "I do not know, and I cannot comprehend how." Who then is so foolish that, because they cannot understand it, they will deny the entire matter that they see before their eyes? So it is in the case of original sin.

2. It is certain that God is not the cause of sin and cannot be. It is also certain that souls are not generated but created by God.
3. The confusion in this matter arises largely from separating the soul and body too much in generation. It is as if God created the soul separately from the body and allowed it to exist for some time outside the body, and then united it with the body later. God, by His co-working providence in human generation, forms the soul in union with the body, so that it does not exist for a single moment without the body. Thus, in the first moment of the soul's existence, there is a human being. From this, it is clear how the imputation of guilt comes to pass.
4. While the soul, when formed in generation, has the essence of a soul, which is inherently good and not sinful, when the soul comes into existence in union with the body, it does not possess greater nobility than that of the generating parents. It lacks the image of God, which God was not obligated to restore to the soul once the human nature had discarded it. Therefore, it is stated in Genesis 5:3, "When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth."
5. The person, now guilty of covenant-breaking and in a fallen state due to generation, is separated from God, empty, insufficient unto himself, in a state of discontent, hollow, gaping, restless, disorderly in movement, desiring, not God, for he is separated from Him, but something undefined. Such a disposition can only give rise to all kinds of desires as a person grows, and these desires provoke self-love, sorrow, anger, hatred, envy, and penetrate various improper objects in various disorderly ways.

Thus, one person generates another, a sinner begets a sinner, and so Adam's sin is passed on to his descendants.

From original sin arise actual sins.

XX. From original sin, various actual sins emerge as per James 1:14, 15: "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin. And sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death." Since desire lures and entices, and gives birth to sin, it is itself sin. For from what is not sin, no sin can arise. The apostle explicitly calls desire sin in Romans 7:7. When desire is said to give birth to sin, it refers to actual sins. Actual sin is unrighteousness and a departure from God's law through internal and external neglect or action. These sins can be categorized in several ways.

Different kinds.

1. There are sins against the first table, demanding love for God, and against the second table, demanding love for one's neighbor.
2. There are sins of neglect and commission. Sin of neglect occurs when one fails to do the commanded good. Although many may not pay attention to this or be troubled by it, it is still a great sin because it arises from unwillingness and a lack of love for God's will. The apostle calls both neglect and commission sin in James 4:17: "So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin." It is noteworthy that sins of neglect are only mentioned as causes of condemnation in Matthew 25:42, 43. Sin of commission occurs when a forbidden evil is done or when good is done in an evil manner and with wrong intent. 1 John 3:8 states, "Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil."

3. There are sins:

(a) Of thoughts, which are not hidden from God's all-seeing eye and are detested by Him (Proverbs 6:18).

(b) Of words. "I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak" (Matthew 12:36).

(c) Of deeds. "And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness'" (Matthew 7:23).

(d) Of gestures, eyes, facial expressions, hands, feet. "A worthless person... winks with his eyes, signals with his feet, points with his finger" (Proverbs 6:12, 13). Sins of thought are the most numerous, but sins of action are the greatest because thoughts accompany them and thus are twofold, having more premeditation and corrupting others.

4. There are sins committed with knowledge and those done out of ignorance. Luke 12:47, 48: "And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating." In some sense, all sins can be said to originate from ignorance, as no one, unless they are a devil, commits a sin under the perception of it being a sin but rather under the guise of necessity, propriety, advantage, or pleasure. However, here, we understand ignorance to refer to the darkness within the sinner, the carelessness in not considering whether what they do or omit is a sin or not, the inattention in not having God before them and not observing what they do. From this arises the absence of recognition or remorse for the committed sin.

Ignorance does not excuse; they should have known, and in many cases, they could have known, but they blindly rushed ahead driven by their desires. Consider Psalm 19:13: "Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression." 1 Corinthians 2:8: "None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." 1 Timothy 1:13: "though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief." Such are heresies. Sin committed with knowledge varies in wickedness according to the clarity and directness with which the light of nature or Scripture exposes the sinning act. It is most dreadful when God reveals His presence and omniscience more directly, admonishing and warning the willing sinner, yet the sinner persists in committing the sin.

5. There are sins committed in secret, either privately or with few witnesses, and there are those committed openly, in the presence of many others. 2 Samuel 12:12: "For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun."
6. There are ruling sins and sins of weakness. Ruling sin exists only in the unconverted.

When Sin Rules.

XXI. Sin rules:

1. When there is no union with Christ through faith; for if one is without Christ, then one is without God (Ephesians 2:12) and dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1).

2. When there is no internal resistance from the heart that arises from that union with God in Christ, and therefore not from true faith, love, fear, and obedience, and consequently not from the Spirit (Romans 8:13): "For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." Natural people can indeed restrain themselves (by the enlightenment of conscience, love for natural virtue, which is truly lovely to anyone who sees even a glimmer of it, even if they don't understand it in its spiritual form and the required spiritual conditions, also by fear of punishment or fear of shame and harm, and sometimes by upbringing and habit) and find resistance in not committing one sin or another. They can thereby lead a virtuous life according to their natural understanding and consider it godliness. From this arises the notion that people can convert themselves. However, there is no resistance from the heart arising from the abovementioned union and disposition in those who do not hinder them from sinning, nor does it prompt them toward virtue. Therefore, it is all worthless, and they are under the dominion of sin.
3. When there is a complete and willing union of the heart with a life outside of God and Christ, not knowing, loving, or seeking that union, and content without it. Such people are united with the world and sin; for all life outside of God and Christ is entirely sin, no matter how civil or naturally religious it may seem to be, as people may imagine it. From this disposition, desire, love, longing, and craving for sin flow, each according to their state of mind, inclination, habit, and opportunity (Romans 8:5): "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh." (1 John 2:15): "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

4. When there is an outpouring of desires for sin, a whole train of sins, and a complete and willing succession of desires as far as possible, without restraint, even by the aforementioned natural reasons (1 Peter 4:4): "With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you" (Ephesians 4:19): "They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity" (Isaiah 5:18): "Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, who draw sin as with cart ropes." (2 Kings 17:17): "And they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings and used divination and omens and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger." This is to be a slave to sin, and to present one's members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness (Romans 6:19, 20).
5. When there is an immediate opposition of the heart to true God-fearing individuals, who manifest themselves as not being of the world, as not being under the dominion of sin, but as having union with God in Christ and walking in the light. Natural people may still find pleasure in natural virtue because it is in harmony with their nature. Even if one dead body is more attractive than another, dead is still dead. But when the born-again not only live virtuously but also, by their speech, display their light, the foundation and nature of their virtue, and thus their excellence over others, then there is an immediate separation of the heart and hatred toward them. This hatred is initially and predominantly found among the time-bound believers and those leading a civil life. See: John 3:20: "For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed." (John 15:19): "If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." This hatred and

opposition of the heart is a clear sign of the rule of sin, for it demonstrates a contradiction, like that between light and darkness, between death and life. In these five points, the unconverted can reflect on themselves and become convinced of their unconverted state. This can also serve the converted to discover that sin does not rule in them.

When Sin Does Not Rule. XXII. The converted still find much of the old Adam within themselves, observing that they frequently stumble, even remaining in sin for some time, and that sin captures and holds them. This often causes their faith to falter, fearing that sin still rules within them. So that they may know that sin does not rule within them but only opposes them as an enemy, we shall now demonstrate when sin does not rule.

Sin does not rule:

(a) When there is a union with Christ through faith, whether that union is clearer, stronger, and more sensitive, or whether it is mostly evident in the activity of seeking reconciliation and union with God in Christ through outgoing desires, prayers, acceptances, surrenders, and struggles, so that the soul cannot remain still without feeling and enjoying that reconciliation and union, even if it cannot attain to the assurance and sensibility of the union. For where there is truth, love, and activity, there is union at the core. Christ is the life of the soul (Colossians 3:4), and being united with life, death does not reign, no matter how small that life may be.

(b) Sin does not rule when there is activity resulting from that union. A converted person considers any activity not arising from this union as insignificant. All their efforts stem from that union, whether received or sought, and are considered and measured in light of God. They desire to do everything out of God, through God, for God,

representing Him, and returning to Him. They are only refreshed when their works are done in God (John 3:21). This union cannot be devoid of activity because faith works through love (Galatians 5:6). It purifies the heart (Acts 15:9), overcomes the world (1 John 5:4), resists the devil (1 Peter 5:9), and is fruitful in good works (James 2:17). The focus is on the truth, not the degree of activity.

(c) Sin does not rule when, arising from this union, there is internal opposition and hatred against all that is sinful, because it is sinful, whether it is great or small. This opposition is directed not only towards sin outside of them but particularly within themselves. This opposition is found in their hearts, causing them to have more aversion to themselves than to anyone else. As in Romans 7:15-17, they say, "For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want... now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me." (Psalm 119:113, 128): "I hate the double-minded, but I love your law. Therefore I consider all your precepts to be right." From this comes sorrow and humiliation over the internal disposition of the heart, over sins of omission, and over sinful deeds. The soul is immediately wounded and feels the pain. This is evidence that there is life, that there is something in direct opposition to sin.

(d) Sin does not rule when, arising from the mentioned union and from internal opposition and hatred, there is active resistance and struggle against sin. They constantly make new resolutions, pray for strength, accept Jesus for sanctification and strength, fear being overwhelmed, seek to be on guard, avoid occasions, and resist when temptations arise. Sometimes they overcome, and sometimes they are overcome in a single act. See Galatians 5:17: "For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you

from doing the things you want to do." It is undeniable that where there is a struggle against sin, sin does not rule.

(e) Sin does not rule when, arising from the union, there is a desire, love, and longing to do everything that pleases the Lord. The opposition is universal, without exception for any sin, just as the union with God's will is universal, without the slightest exception. Romans 7:22 says, "For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being." (Psalm 119:67): "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word." Not only is there love for and union with God's will, but also love for all those whom they consider to be loved by God and to love God. They experience a repulsion, displeasure, and a separation of hearts from the world. See Psalm 15:4: "In whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who fear the LORD." (1 John 3:14): "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers."

Now, take all these factors together and compare them with the signs of sin's rule. If someone finds that the signs of its dominion are not present within them but truly finds within themselves all the signs of its non-dominion, even though not to the degree they desire, they can be assured that sin does not rule within them. They should rejoice and not let their faith falter due to the power of the remaining corruption, but continue to grow in sanctification with sincerity and confidence.

Forgivable and Unforgivable Sins.

XXIII. There are forgivable and unforgivable sins. We call some sins forgivable, not because they do not deserve punishment by their nature or cannot be forgiven without perfect satisfaction, for there is no sin, no matter how small, that fits such a description. Even though sins vary in degree and, accordingly, merit a more severe

punishment, the slightest sin still deserves eternal damnation. See this in Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death." James 2:10: "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it." Galatians 3:10: "For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse." However, we call them forgivable because they are forgiven to all those who believe and repent.

Unforgivable are all the sins of those who have lived in sin and die in it. For them, there is no ransom, and thus, no forgiveness for eternity. Therefore, they are unforgivable in terms of the outcome. Besides these, there is an unforgivable sin known as the sin against the Holy Spirit, Matthew 12:31.

Sin Against the Holy Spirit.

XXIV. The sin against the Holy Spirit is described in Matthew 12:31, "blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven." Mark 3:29-30 adds, "Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin." They said, "He has an unclean spirit." (1 John 5:16): "If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life." A sin leading to death, for which a godly person need not pray for others when he knows they have committed it, cannot be anything other than the sin against the Holy Spirit, even though it is not explicitly called that. It is said to be against the Holy Spirit, not so much against His person as against His work, enlightenment, sanctification, consolation in God's children, and powerful works confirming true doctrine and individual conviction.

What It Is Not.

It does not consist of impenitence, for if every sinner dying in his sin did not repent, it could not be said not to pray for such a sinner, for

one cannot know beforehand whether an ordinary sinner will repent or not.

What It Is.

From this passage, 1 John 5:16, it also appears that it did not only occur during Christ's time but continued afterward. However, it consists of a complete turning away from the acknowledged truth, a hatred and opposition to the truth and godliness arising from pure and bitter wickedness. A true convert never falls into this sin because they are kept by the power of God for salvation (1 Peter 1:5), and it is impossible for the elect to be deceived (Matthew 24:24). God's firm foundation stands (2 Timothy 2:19). Moreover, it is not an ordinary sin of the unconverted, but an extraordinary one that is not committed so often. Nevertheless, it is to be believed that some may take one or two steps toward this sin, even if others do not notice it. It is also to be believed that it is most commonly committed where the greatest power of the Holy Spirit is manifested for the conversion of people.

To understand the nature of this sin, consider the following propositions:

XXV. 1. In such a sinner, there is a clear knowledge and conviction that what they are opposing afterward was from God and true. I dare not say that such a sin requires a clear and powerful conviction of the heart regarding all points of true religion, nor that such a sinner confesses that truth and is a member of the Church. But at least there must be knowledge and conviction in someone that the doctrine, life, and work of those with whom they associate are true, godly, and from God. The Pharisees and scribes who committed this sin had not been disciples of Christ, as far as one can deduce. They did not know that Christ was truly the Messiah (1 Corinthians 2:8). Nor is it certain

that they had a precise knowledge of the Divine persons. However, God's Spirit had convinced them that Christ's teaching, life, and miracles were from God and through God. Christ was known as a prophet, powerful in works and words for God and all the people (Luke 24:19). Pilate himself knew that the Jews had handed over Christ out of envy (Mark 15:10).

XXVI. 2. In such a sinner, there arises wickedness and hatred toward those in whom God's Spirit powerfully works for enlightenment, joy, holiness, zeal, eloquence, and so on. This wickedness and hatred may manifest against the Church of Christ in general, or a particular congregation, or a specific company of the godly, or a particular person, whether a teacher or a member. It is not due to any physical cause or a general or particular disagreement but stems from a hatred of the truth and the work that the sinner knows is from God and through God. This is evident in the entire behavior of the Jews towards Christ, described throughout the Gospel, particularly in Matthew 12 and 1 John 5. We also see it in them in the case of Stephen (Acts 7:54): "Now when they heard these things, they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him."

XXVII. 3. In such a sinner, there is a malicious opposition and persecution against those in whom the Holy Spirit works so powerfully. If, previously, they were in communion with the church or a particular company of the godly, they abandon it; they can no longer bear it there. They oppose it maliciously and persecute it as much as they can for the sake of truth, godliness, and activity. This occurs through blasphemy, slander, reviling, contradicting, making the work of the Holy Spirit in them out to be the work of the devil, of the flesh, of hypocrisy, of pride, and so on. And if they have more power, they oppose it to eradicate that work, to strip them of their good name, possessions, or even their lives. We see this in the

Pharisees and scribes, in their constant blasphemies and efforts to find ways to kill Him, and finally, in the killing of the Lord Jesus.

This is what the apostle presents in Hebrews 10:26-29: "For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace?"

XXVIII. 4. Following this, there is an irreparable hardness of heart and an inability to repent. I say this follows the sin, as it is not the nature of the sin itself. They do not repent, and God leaves them to themselves, giving them over to their wickedness. They are driven by their malice like a raging sea, like chaff in the wind. They continue in their fury as long as they live or have the opportunity. And even if they come to some semblance of calm, they see their sin but immediately feel a sense of hopelessness. They realize that heaven is closed to them, that Christ is not for them, and as a result, they experience no sorrow, no seeking, no praying. Instead, they feel the beginnings of hell, the terror of God consumes them, or they may end their own lives like Judas or die while blaspheming like Julian.

5. Alongside this is unforgivability. Not because the sin itself, when considered in isolation, cannot be forgiven due to the inadequacy of God's mercy or the merits of Christ, but because God refuses to forgive that sin. It will not be forgiven, as mentioned in Matthew 12:31, and there is no forgiveness for eternity, as stated in Mark 3:29.

How One Can Fall into Such Sin.

XXIX. (a) You may wonder, how is it possible for someone to fall into such a sin? How can a person behave in such a way in the presence of known truth, godliness, and the work of the Holy Spirit? I answer: It is true that no one can oppose truth as truth and commit sin as sin unless they are a fleshly devil. But when an unregenerate person, albeit enlightened and convinced of the truth and godliness, the work of the Holy Spirit, or even joining with such people and appearing as one with them, realizes that they are not in sync, that their light exposes them against their will and with sorrow; when they discover that they receive no honor or esteem alongside or above others, but their light is eclipsed, and someone else receives more respect and love than they do; when they are perceived and regarded by others as not understanding the spiritual mysteries, as still unconverted and in a wretched state, as a hypocritical time-believer and follower, and they are continually rebuked - at that point, when they do or say something, their evil heart is stirred with anger and envy, it is fueled and begins to manifest. Initially, they direct their anger against individuals, feeling wronged by them, but eventually, they turn against the individuals for the sake of the matter itself and the manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit in those individuals. From this springs avoidance of those people and of the known truth of God, followed by blasphemy, slander, opposition, and persecution against that light, truth, godliness, and activity. So, the initial origin of this sin is generally self-love, self-honor, not receiving it, but being exposed, rebuked, and continually scorned, so that their malice gradually escalates until it reaches the sin mentioned above.

XXX. (b) You might think that all unconverted individuals have a hatred for the light of truth and oppose it, so the sin against the Holy

Spirit must be something different from what has been described. I answer:

(1) The seed of all sins, including the sin against the Holy Spirit, is present in the nature of all people and would be committed by them if they were in all circumstances and God's restraining power did not hinder them. Therefore, the sin against the Holy Spirit is not something for which the seed is absent in human nature.

(2) Not all people come to the knowledge of the truth and godliness, the powerful workings of the Holy Spirit, and the conviction that they are from God.

(3) In everyone, that hatred and the inclination to oppose are not expressed, but restrained, whether due to a lack of opportunity, some other natural insights, or the restraining power of God.

(4) The sin against the Holy Spirit is not the ordinary hatred and opposition but an extraordinary outburst of hatred and wickedness, accompanied by blasphemy and persecution.

Misconception of Some.

XXXI. A. From what has been said, the misconception of some becomes clear. Those who do not understand the nature of this sin and, while sinning much against their better knowledge and lively conscience, imagine that they have committed the sin against the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they dare not pray for forgiveness because they believe you cannot pray for such sins, and there is no forgiveness for them. This leads them into great terror and distress. Such individuals need to be instructed:

1. The sin against the Holy Spirit does not focus on the person committing the sin but on others outside of them. It targets the truth, godliness, and powerful workings of God's Spirit manifesting in the godly, causing sorrow to the sinner.
2. Not praying for such individuals pertains to others, not themselves. Even if someone has committed this sin, they remain obligated to pray and repent, though they may resist.
3. This sin involves a significant outburst of hatred and anger against others for their light, accompanied by persecution through blasphemy and oppression.
4. There is no repentance or seeking reconciliation associated with this sin. From this, individuals can clearly see whether they have gone astray, that they have not committed this sin, and that it was merely a deception of their dark heart, often exploited by the devil to unsettle souls and, if possible, lead them to despair.

B. Everyone should take heed not to allow their hearts to become callous in situations that could lead them to commit this sin. They must avoid engaging in hostility against someone who possesses or appears to possess the Spirit and life, even if that person acts inappropriately. By progressing in this manner, one should avoid falling into this sin. They should always bear in mind the dreadful judgment reserved for those who commit such sins.

C. Everyone must be cautious not to act recklessly towards someone who opposes, whether it be a spouse, children, parents, close relatives, or others with whom they have close relationships. Instead of constantly reproaching, scorning, provoking, or attempting to force them into conversion with anger and violence, individuals

should take care not to provide them with an opportunity to commit this sin.

The application of sin in general for humbling humanity will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 6

On Free Will or Inability, and the Punishment of Sin.

Having examined both original and actual sins, we shall now address the absolute inability of humanity to lift itself from that sinful state and restore itself to a holy state, often referred to as free will. Free will is called "autexousia" in Greek. This word is not found in Scripture but was brought into the Church by the converted Platonic philosophers. In its proper sense, it means self-power or self-determination, the ability to be one's own master, a prerogative that properly belongs to God alone. However, in a certain sense, it can also be applied to humans. In Latin, the words "Liberum arbitrium" are used, which can be translated as free judgment or free will.

God has endowed the human soul with intellect and will. The intellect encompasses understanding, judgment, and conscience. Judgment either establishes in a general sense what is true and the nature of a matter or specifically presents and determines the human will, indicating what should be done or avoided, loved or hated, here and now. The human will is the power to love or hate something.

How Not Free.

II. When we speak of free will, it should be understood:

1. That human will is not free from dependence on God, for humans entirely depend on God:
2. (a) In terms of their being,
3. (b) In terms of their actions,
4. (c) In terms of God's right to bind them to His will and laws, so they must love what is commanded and hate what is forbidden, and
5. (d) In terms of God's foreknowledge and decree, as He infallibly knows and has determined that every matter and action will have a certain outcome, which foreknowledge cannot be deceived, and that decree cannot be changed. We have discussed these matters extensively in chapters III, V, and XI.
6. That the will is not free from following the applying judgment of the intellect. The will cannot work independently of the intellect, nor can it act otherwise than by following the intellect's guidance in this respect because humans are rational beings and act in a rational manner. Otherwise, the will could reject what is good under the guise of good and love sin as sin, which would be irrational.
7. That the human will is not free from the inclinations within them, for humans act according to their nature. If a person has a perfectly holy nature, their will serves righteousness, and the will follows that perfect inclination (Romans 6:18). If someone's nature is nothing but sin, their will serves sin (John 8:34), and the will follows and acts according to the sinful nature. A holy

nature results in a holy will, and a sinful nature results in a sinful will.

How Indeed Free.

III. Although the will necessarily depends on the above-mentioned factors, this necessity does not diminish the freedom of the will, nor is it forced by this necessity because it naturally follows. The will is free:

(a) From external compulsion, which no human on Earth has the power to force someone's will, or make a person do something they do not want to do. To bring a person to their will, they must arrange things in such a way that the person chooses and wills of their own accord.

(b) The human will is also free from natural impulses that drive animals towards their ends without any knowledge. Instead, the will follows the intellect and acts rationally.

Consists in Spontaneity.

IV. Having seen that the will of humans is not entirely free and yet is free, the question arises: What does freedom actually consist of, in indifference and neutrality to do or not do something, to do this or its opposite? Or does it consist of spontaneity in doing what one chooses, what pleases them, and thus doing it naturally? Answer. The Roman Catholics and Remonstrants claim it consists of indifference in choosing to do something or not, to do this or its opposite. We claim that, in its natural state, the human will, considered in isolation without any circumstances, is such that it is undetermined and indifferent to act, to do this or its opposite, and it remains indifferent until the applying judgment determines what

should be done or left undone at that moment. However, once the will is determined by the applying judgment, it cannot remain indifferent, and it cannot but choose to do what has been determined and not choose to do the opposite. Thus, the freedom of the will does not lie in the indifference to want or not want, to want this or its opposite, given all the necessary conditions and determinations; rather, it lies in spontaneity.

Proof 1. From the Nature of God and Angels.

V. This is evident:

1. From the nature of God, angels, the glorified in Christ, and even the demons. God cannot be anything other than holy, just, and true, and He cannot want to be anything other than that. Is God's will not the freest of all? The holy angels and those glorified in Christ cannot want to do good or evil; they can only want to be good and do good. Is their will not completely free? The demons cannot want to do good but only want to do evil. Thus, in all of them, there is complete freedom, yet there is no indifference to wanting or not wanting, to wanting to do this or its opposite. Therefore, the freedom of the will does not consist of indifference but of spontaneity.

2. Is Never Indeterminate.

If we consider the will in its abstract nature alongside our thoughts, it is never truly undetermined, either by God's Providence, the applying judgment, or the disposition or state of nature. Therefore, the will cannot, given all the necessary conditions for action, choose to act or not, to do this or its opposite. Instead, it willingly embraces what it is determined to do by God and the applying judgment, and thus it is not indifferent.

3. Absurdities.

Placing the freedom of the will in indifference leads to absurdities. It would imply that people could will their own damnation, forever remaining in misery without ever attaining the highest bliss. Wanting to be saved and being damned stand in opposition, and the will is indifferent to both. In such a scenario, praying for conversion would be in vain because the will could not be drawn from its indifference by any divine influence, and individuals could always choose not to be converted. This would suggest that God has no power over human will, as the will would remain independent and sovereign, which would be absurd in itself.

Therefore, since the freedom of the will does not reside in indifference or neutrality, it is evident that the freedom of the will lies in spontaneity—not through blind impulse like animals but through its own intelligent choice. It willingly desires, loves, and embraces what the applying judgment presents as what should be done and desired here and now.

Can Humans Perform Spiritual Good?

VI. Now, the question is whether humans are so enslaved to sin that they cannot will anything other than to live in sin. We speak of willing, not wishing. Can they, with a powerful and will-leading desire, will to convert and fulfill the law? In other words, is humanity, after the fall, still in an indifferent state of free will regarding conversion or non-conversion, doing good or doing evil? To put it briefly, can a sinful person genuinely repent and still possess enough inherent ability for it?

Answer.

Roman Catholics and Remonstrants say yes; we say no. To understand this clearly, one must distinguish between various types of goods and the various states of humans.

There are four types of goods:

(a) Natural goods, such as eating, drinking, walking, standing, speaking, sleeping, and so on.

(b) Civil goods, such as being polite, kind, helpful, honest, and just in one's conduct.

(c) External religious goods, such as hearing God's Word, reading it, offering prayers from the intellect, giving alms, and so on.

(d) Spiritual goods, arising from an inner union with God in Christ and thus from a foundation of spiritual life, involving faith, love, reverence, and obedience to God as Father, entirely and wholly aligning oneself with the Lord's will and doing it. The question pertains to the last type.

There are also four states of humans:

(a) The state of perfection before the fall.

(b) The unconverted state after the fall.

(c) The reborn state.

(d) The state of glory.

The question does not concern the first and two last states but rather the second.

So, the question is whether an unconverted person can truly convert themselves, come alive, believe truly in Christ, and genuinely live in holiness and spirituality?

We say absolutely not. This is evident for several reasons.

VII. From the Depravity of Humans Before Conversion.

- They are blind; they do not know.
- They are wicked; they do not want.
- They are hostile.
- They are powerless and cannot subject themselves to God's law.
- They are dead (Romans 8:7). The mind of the flesh is enmity against God, for it does not submit to the law of God; neither can it.
- Conversion is the work of God: creating, regenerating, drawing, removing the stony heart and giving a heart of flesh, and so on.

The Punishment of Sin.

VIII. Having considered the miseries of humanity in the original fall, original sin, actual sin, and spiritual impotence, let us now address human misery in relation to the deserved punishment.

Punishment is imposed upon a rational creature subject to a law. Therefore, the harm that befalls animals is not truly a punishment upon them but rather upon humans who own these animals. This may serve to prevent them from causing harm to people or as a consequence of the curse due to the first sin, revealing God's righteous wrath against human transgressions. Thus, the stubborn ox had to be put to death, Achan's livestock were killed along with him, and all the animals perished in the flood.

God Inflicts Punishment.

All punishment originates from God. God does not punish a holy creature (for Christ, as the Redeemer, has taken upon Himself the sins), but He does punish the sinner as a just Judge (Romans 1:18). "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Romans 2:5-6), "in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds."

Through Other Creatures.

God employs various creatures as instruments for punishment, according to His pleasure: the sun, moon, stars (Judges 5:20), rain, wind (Psalm 148:8), angels (Acts 12:23), demons (Job 1 and 2), humans (Isaiah 10:25), and even pests (Joel 1:4; 2:25).

Sin Is the Cause of Punishment.

Romans 6:23 states, "For the wages of sin is death." Jeremiah 2:19 says, "Your evil will chastise you, and your apostasy will reprove you." Indeed, every sin deserves eternal damnation, for "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all" (James 2:10). Every sin constitutes a complete rejection of the eternal God by its very nature and leaves the sinner in an eternal state of sin. Hence, the righteous threat in Galatians 3:10: "For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law and do them.'"

IX. Punishment can be categorized into two types: temporal and eternal.

Temporal Punishments to the Body.

Temporal punishments are either bodily or spiritual. Bodily punishments take various forms, including physical infirmities, diseases, discomfort, plagues, wars, famine, and death. These are all considered paternal chastisements out of love for the godly, meant for their benefit. However, for the wicked, they are punishments arising from God's avenging justice and wrath (Psalm 50:21), as He declares, "I will rebuke you and lay the charge before your eyes."

Spiritual Punishments to the Soul.

Spiritual punishments include:

(a) Deprivation of the misused light of knowledge (Romans 1:21). "For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking." (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11). "Because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false."

(b) Abandonment to one's own devices, leading to a descent into further sin (Psalm 81:12-13). "So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels." (Romans 1:24). "Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity."

(c) The hardening of hearts (Exodus 7:3, 22). "But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 7:3). "But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts. So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened" (Exodus 7:22). These texts illustrate how God punishes sins with more sins.

Eternal Punishment.

X. Eternal punishment is referred to as death (Romans 6:23), the second death (Revelation 20:6), hell (Matthew 23:33), hellfire (Matthew 5:22), and eternal fire (Matthew 25:41). It is also described by the places where eternal punishment is endured: the place of torment (Luke 16:28), the abyss (Luke 8:31), and the lake of fire burning with sulfur (Revelation 19:20).

Most commonly, it is called hell. In Greek, two words are used: "hades," which is also used by the pagans to refer to hell, and "gehenna," used exclusively in Scripture. The latter term is derived from the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom, a cursed place where Israelites burned their children in honor of the idol Moloch. King Josiah later made it a place of abomination by bringing all sorts of uncleanness to it (2 Kings 18:10). In Hebrew, it is called "Sheol," a pit.

The place where eternal punishments are suffered is not a mere fiction, existing only in the imagination of humans. It is a definite place that exists now and will not be created in the future. Devils are confined there, although they are temporarily released for judgment (2 Peter 2:4). The Sodomites are subjected to the punishment of eternal fire (Jude 1:7). When the wicked die, their souls are sent there, as seen in Luke 16:23.

It Does Not Involve Annihilation, But the Sensation of Pain.

XI. The question arises: Does eternal punishment entail the annihilation of the soul and body? Or do the souls and bodies of the wicked continue to exist, experiencing indescribable torment for all eternity?

Socinus asserts the former, while we affirm the latter. This can be demonstrated:

Proof 1: Resurrection of the Wicked.

From the resurrection of the wicked (Acts 24:15): "There will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust." All people on Earth are divided into these two categories; there is no third category. Therefore, the unjust will be resurrected just as the just will. The unjust will also appear before the Judge of the whole Earth and be raised for judgment. "Those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:29). The Father has given Him authority to execute judgment. If Christ were to judge all people, they must be present. Since most are as though dead, they must be raised. This explains Jesus' statement in verse 28: "An hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice." This means those who are dead, returned to dust, and mingled with the earth. In verse 29, He distinguishes individuals and outcomes. There is no mention of a spiritual resurrection here, as in verse 24-25. This is because verse 29 refers to those who did not partake in the spiritual resurrection. Not all people are born again, and those who are spiritually resurrected cannot be resurrected for condemnation, as indicated here for those who have done evil. Therefore, it is firmly established that this passage speaks of bodily resurrection, including the resurrection of those who have done evil. If the wicked are to be resurrected and appear for judgment, they have not been annihilated in death. Thus, the souls of Cain and Judas, who went to their places, remain in existence, as do the souls of all the wicked, imprisoned with the spirits of the wicked from the ancient world (1 Peter 3:19). Furthermore, they are not annihilated afterward.

2. Immortality.

XII. The human soul is immortal by its nature; humans cannot kill it, and God will not kill it. Consider Matthew 10:28, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." When the soul is brought into relation with or contrasted against the body, it means nothing other than a substantial part of the human being, as discussed in Chapter X.

This substantial part of humans cannot be killed by other humans; all their power extends only to the body, and the utmost they can do is kill the body. If the soul were annihilated in death, then humans could kill the soul as well as the body. However, since humans cannot do that, it is clear and certain that the soul remains after the body is killed. This is the power of Christ's argument: that people need not fear other humans but should fear God, as He is the one who can both punish the soul and the body eternally in hell. In this verse, "kill" (*apokteinai*) does not mean killing the soul, which is beyond human capacity, but "destroy" (*apolesai*) in hell. When the body is resurrected and reunited with the soul, the ungodly person is cast into hell, where they are tormented. This is an eternal destruction (2 Thessalonians 1:9). The sense of this passage is straightforward: God is to be feared more than humans because humans can only harm the body, not the soul. God, on the other hand, can punish both the body and the soul eternally in hell. Therefore, the soul is not annihilated in death, but the wicked remain in eternal torment.

3. From Scripture.

XIII. The fact that the wicked are not annihilated but will be eternally miserable is also evident from Matthew 26:24, "It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." Judas's

misery during his life did not seem significant; he even received money toward the end, which might justify it. He could have lived favorably with his enemies, and his death was swift and accompanied by little pain. If he had been annihilated, why would it have been better for him never to have been born? These words clearly indicate that his sufferings after death would be dreadful and unbearable. Therefore, the ungodly continue to exist after death, and they exist in torment.

XIV. 4. This is further confirmed by all the passages that explicitly state that the wicked will suffer pain for eternity. Matthew 25:41, 46, "Depart from me... into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." Fire in God's Word does not always refer to physical fire but signifies the most severe torment. This fire affects the devils, who are not subject to physical fire. They themselves acknowledge it in Matthew 8:29, "Have you come here to torment us before the time?" Thus, Jesus explains that what He called "fire" in verse 41, He calls "punishment" in verse 46.

This fire, this punishment, is described as eternal. "Eternal" sometimes means a very long time, but more often it signifies endlessness. Even if we were to take it in the first sense, it still demonstrates that the ungodly are not annihilated in death or judgment. However, in this context, it signifies eternity, as the contrast indicates. "Eternal life" unquestionably means endless happiness, and in opposition, there is also an eternity, but one of pain. The Sodomites are said to endure the punishment of eternal fire (Jude 1:7). Sodom was entirely consumed by fire, but its inhabitants (referred to as the place and hence those who had committed fornication) continued to suffer eternal punishment.

Add to this Mark 9:43, 44, "thrown into hell, into the unquenchable fire, where their worm does not die." It is evident that this is not speaking of what humans experience in this life but what will happen to them after death in hell. This is where the rich man, after dying, ended up (Luke 16). Hell, the place of the damned, is called fire due to the intensity of the torment. It is said to be unquenchable, meaning it remains forever, never-ending, because it will continuously torment the ungodly who also will remain forever. The worm, which is the conscience of the ungodly, never dies. If the conscience of the ungodly endures, so must the ungodly themselves. Therefore, "unquenchable" does not mean it will continue until its work is done, as long as there is something to gnaw at, even in this life. Instead, it signifies that it is not here but in hell, after this life. Christ sets the sufferings in this life, such as cutting off hands and feet, against eternal torments, urging us to undergo the former to escape the latter. No one enters hell in this life; it is after death.

Absurdities.

XV. 5. If eternal punishment consisted of annihilation, then animals would also suffer eternal punishment. It would then be right to say, as the Epicureans do, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die," in contradiction to 1 Corinthians 15:32. It would not be true that it is right for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, as stated in 2 Thessalonians 1:6, because that does not always happen in this life.

Therefore, it remains certain that eternal punishment does not consist of the destruction of the soul and body but in the continued existence of both in endless torment.

Objection 1.

XVI. It is objected that God's mercy cannot allow His creatures to be eternally tormented and that the punishment would not be proportionate or correspond to the sin, and thus even God's justice cannot demand eternal punishment.

Answer.

I reply that such thoughts arise from ignorance of God's nature and of sin. They also result from contempt and disbelief in the Word of God. God's Word states it. Who are we to argue against it? God's avenging righteousness is inherent to Him, so He cannot do otherwise than punish sin, as we have shown in Chapter III, paragraph 39. Sin contains an infinity within itself and is committed against the infinite God. It involves a complete rejection of God and a complete separation from Him. The sinner remains eternally in a sinful state; therefore, it is just for His wrath to also endure on them. God's mercy does not conflict with His justice; they each have a different object. Justice has as its object the sinner for their sin, while God's mercy has as its object the believers, for whom justice has been satisfied by Christ.

Consists in the loss of salvation.

XVII. Eternal punishment consists of loss and feeling. The damned will remain in existence for eternity but will forever lack everything that constitutes blessedness: all light, communion with God and Christ, all peace, rest, joy, love, and holiness, and even all the goodness that God, in His patience, allowed them to enjoy in this life, will be entirely taken away from them. The damned, who will remain rational creatures, will not be as insensible to the absence of God as they are now, distracted by physical goods. Since they will be empty of everything and unable to find contentment in themselves, humanity will be in a horrifying, wailing condition. Because there is

no hope of any fulfillment or refreshment for eternity, they will be filled with restlessness, anger against God, who denies them everything, and despair because it will last eternally without the slightest hope. Even if there were nothing else in hell but deprivation, it would be unbearable. This is beyond our comprehension because there is never a complete absence of relief here. Paul speaks of this state in 2 Thessalonians 1:9, "They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

And in the experience of pain.

XVIII. Eternal punishment also involves the experience of pain, as we have just elaborated. However, what will be felt and how terrible it will be is incomprehensible. Paul expresses it as "wrath and fury, distress and anguish" (Romans 2:8-9). Daniel calls it "contempt and everlasting abhorrence" (Daniel 12:2). It is generally referred to as fire, torment, weeping, and gnashing of teeth. Everything that God is will be against them, and they will be eternally filled with God's wrath, the unendurable nature of which we will soon demonstrate. Because there will be no relief, and the slightest decrease in suffering is not to be hoped for in eternity, it will bring about despair! In addition, the body will undergo extreme pain, but we do not know the specifics.

On the question: Will there be fire there?

We answer: yes, for the Scripture says so, but in what manner we do not know, and we need not concern ourselves with it; blessed is the one who shall not experience it through firsthand knowledge. Where hell is, I do not wish to investigate.

On the question: Will one suffer more intensely than another?

We also say yes, for the Scripture clearly states this. While they may not all be equal in this regard, as there will be no annihilation, relief, or redemption for all eternity, some will undoubtedly experience more unbearable torment than others, depending on the severity of their sins. Consider this: Matthew 11:22 - "It will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you." Matthew 23:14 - "You will receive the greater condemnation." And in Luke 12:47-48, varying degrees of punishment are connected to the degrees of sin.

Man is wretched.

XIX. Thus, we have shown you the wretchedness of humanity in many respects, concerning both the fall of Adam and original sin, actual sin, the impotence and punishment of sin. Do not remain content with this mere knowledge; instead, apply it all to practical life, consider it in the context of yourself. Let it be known to you and engraved upon your heart that you are the most wretched creature on the face of the earth. Your hair would stand on end with terror, your eyes would never be dry from tears, your teeth would never cease gnashing, and your hands would never stop wringing if you could but glimpse your own misery. Listen attentively as I speak to you. May the Lord grant you to see and feel it. You are wretched in many respects.

Lacks God's Image.

XX. 1. Concerning sinfulness. Go back to paradise and see how skillfully and gloriously your nature, the very one you possess, was created in Adam, in sweet communion with God. Observe how willfully you have fallen away from God and turned to the devil. By sinning, you forfeit the glory of God. God's image, according to which you were created in Adam, is gone from you. There is neither light,

nor life, nor truth, nor love, nor holiness, nor glory within you; rather, the form of the hideous, black devil resides within. Your soul has taken on an evil, devilish form; it is blind and unable to comprehend the things of the Spirit of God. It is estranged from the life of God due to ignorance, dead in sins, capable of conceiving and committing all abominations. It delights only in what God hates and loathes what God loves. Your soul is steeped in filth, stench, loathsomeness, and intolerableness.

In a Horrible State.

XXI. Your soul is a pool teeming with hatred, envy, wrath, malice, impurity, injustice, falsehood, pride, godlessness, godlessness, and hideous thoughts. Your throat is an open grave; with your tongue, you practice deceit; venom of snakes is under your lips, and your mouth is full of bitterness. Your eyes, ears, hands, feet, and all your members are instruments of unrighteousness, and you are entirely a servant of sin. You are of your father, the devil, a captive of Satan, belonging to the devil. Thus, you are separated from God, and you willingly remain separated from Him, taking pleasure in your wicked form and deeds. In short, you are in direct opposition and enmity against the high, holy, and glorious God, both in form and effect. What aggravates your hideousness greatly is that there is not a single righteous person in your race. Whether you trace your genealogy back five thousand years to Adam or not, everyone in your entire lineage is inherently a liar, a murderer, a thief, impure, a monstrous creature in their heart. You are impure from an impure race (Job 14:4). Flesh from flesh (Psalm 51:7). By nature, a child of wrath (Ephesians 2:3). Only evil from your youth (Genesis 8:21). Consider these Scriptures and others attentively, and standing before God, hear these words from the mouth of the Lord, see yourself as He

names you, engrave them in your heart, and be absolutely convinced that you are such because God declares you to be so.

How to Recognize This.

XXII. However, it is necessary to have more than just a perception of your sinfulness through faith in the Word of God. To be truly humbled and fit to receive grace in Christ, one must also gain a vision and feeling of this. For this purpose, one must not only reflect on the law of nature and compare their deeds with what nature teaches to be good or evil. They must also strive to acquire a good understanding of the virtues and vices presented to us in the law of the Ten Commandments. For this, read the Catechism from Lord's Day 34 to Lord's Day 45. Do not seek only an extensive knowledge of the subject matter—good and evil thoughts, words, and deeds—but also of their form. Note that every action must stem from:

(a) A reconciled and united disposition with God, so that one does not serve God as a foreign and angry Judge but as a satisfied Father.

(b) A lively consideration of oneself as a creature under the sole Lord, who, through His and our nature, binds us to submission in everything.

(c) A joyful willingness and obedience.

(d) Pure love.

(e) An understanding and representation of His sovereignty and awesomeness, thus in His fear.

(f) An eager embrace of His will because it is His will, so that our will is consumed by His.

(g) A burning affection for His glory, desiring that He alone be glorified through it, that nothing else is sought after.

(h) A fervent zeal and perseverance, until every deed is fully executed in all its circumstances. In a word: everything must be done from God, depending on Him, before His face, and everything must end in Him. From this, you will not be content with having done a good deed, but you will see how horribly you have defiled even the best deeds and how dreadful every sin is.

How to Reach This.

XXIII. 1. Frequently reflect upon this and examine all your inner and outer actions. Keep watch over your thoughts, words, and deeds throughout the entire day. Sit down each evening and review the history of your conduct for that day. Go from hour to hour, place to place, person to person whom you have encountered, event to event that has occurred, and consider how you conducted yourself in each circumstance. Go from commandment to commandment and trace it all back to the corruption of your nature, concluding what might have arisen from it if opportunity and inclination had allowed. Add to all this the qualities mentioned above, required for every work, in order to truly understand yourself. However, this will not bring you to a state of genuine perplexity and profound brokenness unless the Lord grants you a vision of His majesty, holiness, righteousness, and truth. He must make you see that sin is a denial, rejection, and contempt of God, and simultaneously impress upon you the dreadfulness of the punishment. Then sin strikes home for the first time, and the sinner becomes disconcerted, seeking help. Thus, they are driven to the Mediator, Christ. Behold, there you now lie as your abominable monster, a monstrous creature, suffocated in your sins.

XXIV. 2. Regarding deserving punishment. Go on to contemplate the temporal and eternal punishments that follow sin. Furthermore, the consideration of the state into which sin has brought you should make you tremble and quiver. For by reason of sin, you are not worthy to tread the earth; it is a wonder that the earth still bears you, that it does not open its mouth to swallow you alive, that fire from heaven does not fall upon you and consume you like Sodom and Gomorrah, that the devil is not allowed to tear you apart and carry your soul to hell. You are not worthy to draw in the air through your nostrils, to behold the sun, to be covered by the canopy of heaven, to place a morsel of bread in your mouth, or to have a thread upon your skin. Look up, contemplate God, the high, holy, and glorious God who is so terrible to the sinner.

Consider what David says about it: Psalm 5:5-7 - "You are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you. The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers. You destroy those who speak lies; the Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man." Thus, Paul speaks of it: Romans 2:8-9 - "But for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil." Hear the thunderous sound: Galatians 3:10 - "For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse." And again: 2 Thessalonians 1:8 - "In flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus." Oh, that God might make you, unconverted person, feel the wrath of God under which you lie, in order to save you through fear, for you do not respond to the kindness of God's drawing and calling.

Whose Horrific Nature is Revealed.

XXV. Allow me to present this to you in a more detailed manner, to see if it stirs any emotion.

(1) Consider the expressions that God uses to describe it: Psalm 76:8 - "You are to be feared; who can stand before you when once your anger is roused?" Psalm 90:11 - "Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you?" Hebrews 10:31 - "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

(2) Ponder the distress of the saints when God hides His face from them, or when God merely allows them to glimpse His anger. David, fearing this, prays: Psalm 6:2 - "Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing; heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled." Jeremiah could endure anything, but he dreaded the anger of God, saying (Jeremiah 17:17), "Be not a terror to me." How Job complained of it: Job 6:4 - "For the arrows of the Almighty are in me; my spirit drinks their poison; the terrors of God are arrayed against me." Heman expresses his anguish this way: Psalm 88:17 - "They surround me like a flood all day long; they close in on me together."

(3) Consider the Lord Jesus, the Redeemer of the elect, how He became a curse and tasted all that could be called misery; how He was assaulted by the devil, rejected, scorned, condemned, crucified, and how the wrath of God grieved and oppressed His soul unto death. He was in fierce combat; He was sorrowful and troubled; He sweated great drops of blood that fell from His face to the ground; He crawled like a worm on the earth; He prayed; He cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" It was exceedingly heavy for Him to atone for the sins of His people.

(4) If all this still doesn't move you, then go to that dreadful condemned pit, and listen to the gnashing, wailing, grinding, the terrible cries of "Woe, woe, woe," the terror, and the frenzied agony

of the conscience of the damned in that eternal fire. Notice how, in eternity, they are not allowed the least glimmer of light or a moment of peace, but are overwhelmed with unspeakable despair of ever being delivered, and with an indescribable sense of God's wrath forever assailing them.

From the State of the Damned.

XXVI. Let your thoughts calmly consider the state of the damned.

(1) What will it be like to have a soul and body that is not self-sufficient and cannot endure without being replenished from elsewhere, yet in all eternity, it will lack that replenishment? There will be no least relief, no food, no drink, no light, no sleep, no company to entertain through conversation. Instead, there will be an infinite separation from God, angels, the godly, joy, and glory. Now, one can mitigate dissatisfaction and sadness with something, and there is no sorrow over what is lacking. But then it will be unbearable when everything else is taken away. What a terrible despair for the empty and lamenting soul!

(2) When the soul, against its will, must continually think about all the blessings God has shown to the body in this life, all the means of salvation, the sermons and preachers who admonished and invited it, yes, even urged it to conversion. But despite all, it resisted, spurned, opposed, and contradicted all the means of grace and all those who, through words and actions, sought to bring it to conviction.

(3) When all the abominations they have committed will constantly come to mind, vividly presented one by one in all their gruesome details.

(4) When they will then blame God, both for not converting them like others and for not taking them to heaven like others. They will accuse God of denying them all grace for all eternity, and their wickedness against God will erupt in all manner of blasphemy.

(5) When, in response, the eternal wrath of God will fill them and inflict unbearable pain upon them, and all the perfections of God will be turned against them. What terror! What anguish! What despair for all eternity!

Why Many Are Not Moved.

XXVII. Behold, all of you who read or hear this, are worthy of these words, and perhaps many of you will become aware of that pit burning with sulfur and brimstone, which will be your portion due to your unrepentance and stubbornness, and that perhaps within a few days. Tremble, fear, repent, so that you may escape that wrath.

Yet, all of this may not even touch some. Some may think they are too strong of spirit to be so alarmed by these things, that they can reasonably answer everything and soothe their conscience.

But I assure you, when God gives someone a trembling heart, they will certainly become aware that the dread of conscience alone will be an unbearable distress. Indeed, the rustling of a leaf will make them shiver. Oh, that you would consider these things with calm wisdom, believe, and apply them to yourself, being unconverted, so that your heart may be alarmed, if it pleases the Lord to grant you conversion!

Perhaps another, upon hearing these things, will think: "I hope for better; God is gracious and merciful; I hope He will keep me from hell."

I reply:

1. Mercy must have as its object someone who is pitiful, but you are detestably pitiful. There is nothing in you that could move God's mercy. You are Lo-Ruhamah, "not pitied" (Hosea 1:6), detestable (Titus 3:3), a generation of wrath (Jeremiah 7:29), repugnant (Ezekiel 16:5), abhorrent (Psalm 5:7), offspring of vipers (Matthew 3:7). Who will have compassion on a snake or a viper when they are wounded? People are only concerned with killing them, or at the very least, removing them. That is how detestable and repulsive you are. Therefore, you have no reason to console yourself with God's mercy. God is just and cannot let sin go unpunished. It is not God's grace to leave any sin unpunished, but it is grace that God has ordained and sent a Redeemer, that He has punished the Redeemer in place of the elect. It is grace that God, through the Gospel, makes this Redeemer known and offers Him. It is grace that God grants someone the faith to accept this Redeemer. It is grace that God converts and sanctifies someone. It is grace that, through the merits of the Redeemer, God leads someone from sanctification to salvation. You, who do not follow this path, have no grace to console yourself with; that is, to deceive yourself to your eternal destruction. You are intolerable to God beyond your detestability, for you do not cease from sinning, from constantly provoking Him, blaspheming Him, despising Him, exalting yourself above God. You show this by not inquiring about God's threats but boldly continue to sin. It is as if you were saying, "Let God do His best; I don't care. I will live as I please, I will abstain from this, I will do that." And you also show it by wanting people to honor you, love you, fear you, obey you, serve you, and that all their actions should end in you. Do you not set yourself up as a

god? Therefore, detestable and intolerable creature, do not imagine that your misery will move God to show mercy.

2. God's justice does not allow sin to go unpunished. God's majesty, which you have trampled underfoot, God's holiness, and God's truth demand satisfaction through bearing the punishment. Therefore, a sinner has neither grace nor mercy to hope for, and surely, they will be deceived in their hope unless they partake in the Redeemer Jesus Christ. Therefore, O human being, be dismayed by your condition and be convicted of your wretchedness and damnation, for the awareness of these is the first step towards grace.

In Regard to Powerlessness.

XXVIII. In regard to powerlessness, behold, there you are in your wretchedness and damnation, abandoned by God and all creatures. Come then, save yourself as a hero if you can, but it is utterly impossible, for your salvation requires complete satisfaction to God's justice through enduring all temporal and eternal punishments, and perfect holiness. This is the demand of God's justice, which no human can justify unless they are just, and it cannot declare the guilty as innocent. God's justice also dictates that no one can enter into the right of eternal life unless they have fulfilled the conditions of the Covenant on which salvation was promised. And now, what will you, miserable one, do? What will you give in exchange for your soul? You cannot bring eternity to completion, bear the punishments to full satisfaction, and emerge as one who has satisfied the law. You cannot rescue yourself from the filthy state of sin and adorn yourself with perfect internal and external purity and holiness to offer yourself pleasingly to God, saying boldly, "Here I am, judge me according to your righteousness." If you grasp even the beginning of

this, let alone its entirety, you will be convinced of your powerlessness and cry out, "Wretched I, I cannot, I am sinking in my misery, where shall I turn? Oh, woe is me!"

Take all of this together and pause to contemplate your utter wretchedness, damnation, and despair. If you are unconverted, this may be a means to prompt you to inquire and seek. Is there no counsel? Is all hope gone? Or is there still a way by which I could be saved? And when the way of Jesus Christ is shown to you, it will be beloved by you, and you will earnestly seek to partake in Him through faith. If you are converted, considering the state of your soul as it was before your conversion will humble and keep you humble. It will teach you to esteem Christ highly and to continually rely on Him. It will make you grateful to glorify God for sending His Son to redeem and bring the poor soul to salvation through Him.

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