I believe in God,
the Father Almighty, Maker
of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, His
only Son, our Lord, who
was conceived by the
Holy Spirit, born of the
Virgin Mary, suffered under
Pontius Pilate, was crucified,
died and was buried.

Loci Communes

1543

PHILIP MELANCHTHON

He descended into hell. The
third day He rose again from
the dead. He ascended into
heaven and sits at the right hand
of God the Father Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge
the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints, the
forgiveness of sins, the
resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

TRANSLATED BY

J. A. O. PREUS

Loci Communes

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Translator's Preface

Master Philip Melanchthon can be described as mysterious and controversial. He has been called a great and noble figure, a scholar, a Renaissance humanist, a Christian reformer, an educator, a gentle and loving soul. He has also been called a villain, a synergist, a unionist, a compromiser, and an irascible troublemaker. He had hosts of loving devotees and hosts of angry and frustrated enemies.

He is not as well known to the English-speaking world as he should be. A few English-speaking writers have referred to him as an outstanding humanistic classical scholar, but if that was his only achievement, he would be of interest today only to historians of classical scholarship. While his knowledge spanned many disciplines, and he taught courses in subjects which ranged from medicine to mathematics, and astrology to astronomy, this aspect of his work is today of interest only to historians of antiquarian thought. He played a key role in the development of the German educational system and gained the title of the *Preceptor Germaniae,* but again this is now of interest only to historians of education. And certainly none of his achievements in these areas (or others, such as music and poetry) would bring against him the strong emotions and verbal attacks from which the poor man suffered in the last half of his life, and has suffered ever since.

It was from his theological statements and his involvements in the church-political conflicts of his time that he gained his notoriety. Luther's old friend Amsdorf was very critical of Melanchthon, and the fierce Flacius was unstinting in his condemnations, as were many others during the Reformation and late Reformation period. On the other hand, his colleagues at Wittenberg and in other parts of Europe loved him dearly. Luther, who had some violent disagreements with him, never criticized him publicly and never really broke with him. In fact, the verdict of history is that Luther was kinder to Melanchthon than Melanchthon was to Luther. Even Joachim Mörlin, the Gnesio-Lutheran mentor of Chemnitz, together with Chemnitz himself, asserted that Melanchthon wrote many praiseworthy books that were useful and edifying, even though at the same time they recognized his theological inadequacies. The Formula of Concord, which was subscribed by thousands of Lutheran pastors and secular and religious leaders, was written to settle controversies within German Lutheranism, many of which were directly caused by Melanchthon. Yet its six authors (one of whom was Chemnitz) decided not to mention Melanchthon's name, either positively or negatively. And thus the author of the basic Lutheran confession—the Augsburg Confession—and its Apology is never mentioned in the final confessional writing of Lutheranism. What an interesting and perplexing situation this is! He had become too hot to handle.

The same ambivalence continues to this day. Clyde Manschreck, a Methodist who has produced some excellent Melanchthon studies, refers to him in the kindest and most complimentary terms, and entitled a book about him *The Quiet Reformer.* Michael Rogness, a Lutheran, entitled his book *Philip Melanchthon: Reformer Without Honor.* He attempts to put Melanchthon in a better light than most Lutherans have done, though he admits some of the problems that attend this effort, as does Lowell Green in a learned article in *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church.* Robert Stupperich, a modern German Melanchthon scholar, has written a book on Master Philip entitled *Der unbekannte Melanchthon,* "The Unknown Melanchthon." Most Lutherans in America up to the present time have been critical of him, including Schmauck, Neve, Bente, Pelikan, and many others, although that attitude is changing somewhat. Caemmerer and Teigen, though approaching the subject from quite different standpoints, have both written negatively about him, both using the same title for their treatises—*The Melanchthonian Blight*—while Ralph Quere, in a writing produced in connection with the 400th anniversary of the Formula of Concord, bravely writes on the *Melanchthonian Motifs in the Formula's Eucharistic Christology.* So to this day the man remains enigmatic and controversial. The opportunity to read more of his work in English may help solve that mystery, or at least explain it.

This little contribution to Melanchthon studies had a rather peculiar origin. Several years ago I was asked to prepare a translation of Martin Chemnitz' *Loci Theologici,* which was basically a commentary on the 1543 edition of Melanchthon's *Loci Communes,* the so-called third edition or *Tertia Aetas.* Although Chemnitz did not finish his commentary, his work is enormous—considerably longer than Melanchthon's work. Chemnitz actually commented only on Loci 1–12 and a portion of Locus 13 of the 24 Loci of Melanchthon. Melanchthon also had added an appendix on marriage to this third edition of his *Loci,* and Chemnitz also commented on this. The published Chemnitz work also included each of these loci of Melanchthon, since they had been included either by Chemnitz himself or Polycarp Leyser, who had edited Chemnitz' work for publication.

After finishing the Chemnitz work, I thought it might be useful to translate the remaining loci of Melanchthon (including some loci which, for the sake of brevity, I had omitted from the Chemnitz work). I discovered that for some reason this third edition had never been translated into English by anyone. The first edition of 1521–22 has been translated twice, once in 1944 by Charles Leander Hill, and again in 1969 by Lowell Satre. The second edition has never been translated at all. In 1965 Clyde Manschreck put into English

the 1555 German edition of Melanchthon's *Loci Communes,* which in fact is quite different from the third and last Latin edition, which was published in 1543 and republished almost up to Melanchthon's death in 1560. A cursory examination of the tables of contents of the three English translations will show that they are quite different, both in the titles of the loci and in their content, as well as in length. Thus, counting the German edition, there are really four quite different versions of the *Loci Communes,* and with the publication of this volume we will have three of them in English—all but the second edition of 1535–43, which interestingly was dedicated to King Henry VIII of England.

My feeling was that since no one has translated this version of 1543 into English, and since I had already translated half of it with the Chemnitz work which was published in 1989, I might as well finish the job. Concordia Publishing House has been willing to take the already-printed portions from the Chemnitz volume and add them to the remaining portions of the Melanchthon work, thus giving the English-speaking reader an opportunity to have before him or her virtually all the major versions or editions of Melanchthon's *Loci Communes,* which after the Augsburg Confession and its Apology is his greatest contribution to the theological literature both of the Lutheran church and also of the church at large.

A casual reading of this material will convince one that we are not dealing here with something of interest only to scientific church historians or theologians. Melanchthon wrote for the church of his day, and he has much to say to the pastor and interested lay person of our day also. For example, his appendix on marriage is particularly relevant in light of the frequent break-up of the home, rampant divorce, and the current debate about the role of women in society.

A few words about Melanchthon, this unknown and mysterious Reformer, might be in order. He started out quite ordinarily. He was born in the Palatinate, near Karlsruhe in south Germany, on February 16, 1497. Thus he was about 14 years younger than Luther. His original name was Schwartzerd (German for "black earth"), due to the fact that the family had been blacksmiths and armorers. At the suggestion of his great uncle—John Reuchlin, the great Hebrew scholar—he Hellenized his name to Melanchthon, which means "black earth" in classical Greek. In passing we should note that Reuchlin had great influence on his brilliant nephew and urged him to go to Wittenberg, but in the final analysis Reuchlin remained a Roman Catholic.

Melanchthon was a prodigy. He entered Heidelberg University at twelve and received his bachelor's degree at 14. He moved on to Tübingen, where he earned the master's degree at 17, and remained on the faculty for four years. He never received the doctorate and was never ordained into the ministry. He never preached from the pulpit, although he had much to do with the development of the study of oratory and homiletics. He received an appointment to teach at the newly established University of Wittenberg in 1518. A great stir was caused by his inaugural address as a member of the faculty, entitled *De corrigendis adolescentiae studiis* ("Correcting or Remodeling the Program of Studies for the Youth"). It called for a dramatic improvement in the educational system of the age, a return to the study of the classical languages and Hebrew, and a reform in the religious life and teaching of the time. He hoped to reform morals through a study of both ancient philosophy and Scripture. It was a revolutionary piece that started him on his career as a humanist, a reformer, a theologian, and an educator.

His thesis delivered in 1519 in connection with his reception of the Bachelor of Theology degree at Wittenberg were fully as revolutionary as his inaugural address in its attack on the doctrine of transubstantiation, their assertion of the principle of *Sola Scriptura,* and the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

He remained at Wittenberg the rest of his life, despite many opportunities to serve elsewhere.

He was an admirer of Luther before arriving at Wittenberg, and for the first several years the two were very close. The influence of Luther is manifest in the Augsburg Confession, its Apology, and in the 1521 edition of the *Loci Communes.* The differences appear as early as 1530, however, and become more evident as the years roll on.

Even while a very young man at Tübingen, Melanchthon had become a notable student of the classical languages. In 1516 he published an edition of the Roman comedian Terence, and before arriving at Wittenberg he had produced an edition of Plutarch and a Greek grammar which subsequently was used for 200 years, even in Catholic schools. He also was a student of the ancient philosophers, Cicero in Latin and Aristotle in Greek. He published several of the writings of each of them, and had the intention of preparing an edition of the complete works of Aristotle before Luther dissuaded him. His teaching assignments ranged from Greek, Latin, Hebrew, astronomy, philosophy, astrology, history, poetry, and medicine to theology. This range of studies does not reveal a mere dilettantism, but rather his viewpoint that all knowledge has a theological connection and purpose, for it all comes from God, the Creator of heaven, an orderly world, and orderly life among people, and all knowledge ultimately leads back to a knowledge of God. With such a wide range of courses and because of his popularity, he often had as many as 1500 students per year. Of some 100 courses he taught, only about 30 were in theology. He did not regard himself as a pastor, but rather as a theologian, a philosopher, and a Christian humanist. Luther admired him greatly for his linguistic as well as his theological skills, and virtually forced him to take up theology and teach it.

Just before leaving Tübingen in June of 1518, he

published his Greek grammar. He was 21. At that time he also received a letter of praise from Erasmus, who was impressed with his studies in humanism. He arrived in Wittenberg in August of the same year and was the first professor of Greek. By 1522 he was working with Luther on the translation of the Bible, and he continued with the on-going revision of this work until Luther's death. He also was involved over the years in revising and reworking Luther's many commentaries on the books of the Bible—even Luther's greatest commentary, his work on Galatians, published in 1535. In 1519 he began teaching and writing a commentary on Romans, a work which played a role in the development of his *Loci Communes* of 1521. He continued at Wittenberg, teaching a wide range of subjects, advising rulers and church leaders on a variety of subjects, writing, publishing, administering the university, and attending countless meetings, many of which involved theological controversies. He married the daughter of the mayor of Wittenberg shortly after his arrival in the city, and they had two sons and two daughters. One daughter married the eminent poet and educator George Sabinus, who was a relative and mentor of Martin Chemnitz. His other daughter married Casper Pèucer, a physician and one of the leading Crypto-Calvinists at Wittenberg.

Melanchthon was a very moral and ethical man, abstemious in his eating and drinking, hard-working, and diligent. He had trouble handling money and was often in debt. Like many university people, including Luther, he was generous to a fault. His home was often filled with students and young professors who boarded with him, among them Martin Chemnitz. His health was never robust, and this may in part account for his timidity and dislike of controversy. But for a theologian of that era to avoid controversy was impossible, especially for Martin Luther's understudy.

He was a very likable person. He was especially effective in dealing with the high and the mighty. He numbered among his correspondents not only Erasmus, but King Henry VIII of England, King Francis I of France, many German rulers, and theologians of all stripes in many countries, including the Patriarch of Constantinople. Many men who later became teachers sat at his feet, thus enhancing his fame throughout central Europe. The two prominent Reformed theologians, Bucer and Oecolampadius, were his schoolmates at Tübingen. This may partially explain the fact that although Bucer ultimately joined the Reformed and Melanchthon stayed with the Lutherans, yet both go down in history as the two men who reached farther in the direction of their friend's church and labored longer for union between their respective churches than any others. Melanchthon was in constant contact with John Calvin, with the Calvinist Hardenberg at Lutheran Bremen, and with many theologians of varying viewpoints. He even wrote the Senate of Roman Catholic Venice, asking them to expel the Unitarian heretic Servetus, and the senate obliged.

His relationship with Luther sheds light on much of the later history of Lutheranism. Luther was and remained the dominant figure and leader. He had a much stronger personality, was fully as bright, and much more colorful and outspoken. He was also much more courageous—a true leader in any age! There never would have been a Reformation if it had been led only by Melanchthon, and with Luther it was almost impossible that there not be one. Yet Melanchthon had qualities which Luther lacked and which Luther admired in his younger understudy—his ability in languages, his tact, his literary talents, and his ability to articulate theology. For example, in his Table Talks as late as the winter of 1542–43, Luther said, "If anyone wishes to become a theologian, he has a great advantage, first of all, in having the Bible. This is now so clear that he can read it without any trouble. Afterward he should read Philip's *Loci Communes*. This he should read diligently and well, until he has its contents fixed in his head. If he has these two he is a theologian, and neither the devil nor a heretic can shake him . . . There's no book under the sun in which the whole of theology is so compactly presented as in the *Loci Communes* . . . No better book has been written after the Holy Scriptures than Philip's. He expresses himself more concisely than I do when he argues and instructs. I'm garrulous and more rhetorical" (Luther's Works, vol. 54 [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967] 439–40).

Luther also admired Melanchthon's ability to state things in an orderly manner. This is evident even in Melanchthon's constant use of the word *order* in his writings. He wanted things to be orderly, whether he was referring to war, politics, family life, or the arrangement of theological concepts. God is a God of order. He created things in an orderly way, and sin and the fall disrupted this order. Note this emphasis on order in Locus 2 on creation in this volume. Christ's reign restored this order at least in part, and good order was a mark of the Christian life, the governance of the Christian church, and a Christian leader, be he secular or ecclesiastical.

Luther was much more bellicose than Melanchthon. For example, he was never quite happy that the Augsburg Confession was so irenic. When the two men prepared documents for the meeting held at Smalcald in 1537, Luther wrote his Smalcald Articles, and Melanchthon his Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope. Luther could not attend the meeting, and Melanchthon went around and got the delegates to table Luther's document, which was never formally adopted in Lutheranism until the adoption of the *Book of Concord* in 1580. On the other hand, he influenced the members of the meeting to adopt his own Treatise, which was a little gentler with the pope. Both documents are now part of the *Book of Concord* and are treated as two parts of the Smalcald Articles. Melanchthon in

his Treatise said that he could accept living under the pope if he did not claim divine right to his office. Luther was past this kind of conciliatory language. In fact, theologians and historians of almost every opinion affirm that Melanchthon's timidity and love of peace hindered the Lutheran cause at times.

On the other hand, Luther and Melanchthon stood together throughout all of their lives on many points. Both opposed John Agricola, the father of the Antinomian Controversy, and they publicly condemned him in 1537. Luther even remained silent about Melanchthon's waffling in his 1540 revision of the Augsburg Confession—the Variata—which on the one hand condemned transubstantiation, as did Luther, of course, but on the other hand it opened the door to a Reformed understanding of the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper. John Calvin could and did accept the Variata edition of the Augsburg Confession—something that he never did with the 1530 edition.

Melanchthon actually strengthened and fortified Luther's theological position in certain ways. He was very strong in supporting the doctrine of justification by faith, and as the time went on and further questions arose, he not only supported Luther but actually advanced beyond him in the articulation of the basic Lutheran doctrine of the proper distinction between Law and Gospel, an emphasis which was continued by such theologians as C.F.W. Walther, Holsten Fagerberg, Edmund Schlink, and many others.

Also related to the doctrine of justification and the distinction between Law and Gospel is Melanchthon's very strong emphasis on the forensic or declarative aspect of this doctrine. For example, note Locus 8 in this third edition, where he says, " 'Justification' means the remission of sins, reconciliation, or the acceptance of a person to eternal life. To the Hebrews 'to justify' is a forensic term, as if I were to say that the Roman people 'justified' Scipio . . . that is, they absolved him or pronounced him to be a righteous man." This position became pivotal in the controversy with Osiander, which took place after Luther's death but while Melanchthon was still alive. Melanchthon was definitely on the right side in this controversy, as the Formula of Concord so clearly asserts, and Lutheranism can be thankful that he prevailed, for Osiander, despite his claims to being the true follower of Luther, introduced innovations on justification which were definitely Roman. That led him into the further error that Christ was mediator only according to his divine nature. In the Osiandrian Controversy, Melanchthon enjoyed the support of all other Lutherans, Crypto-Calvinists, Gnesio-Lutherans, Chemnitz, Mörlin, and Flacius (one of the few times Melanchthon was on the prevailing side).

Likewise, Melanchthon's support of Luther on the question of the imputation of Christ's righteousness (as over against some kind of inherent or essential righteousness on man's part) was correct and appropriate. As early as his famous Baccalaureate Theses of 1519, when he received his Bachelor of Theology degree at Wittenberg, Melanchthon had stressed this doctrine, even before Luther. He said in Thesis 10, "All our righteousness is a gracious imputation of God." This point came up again in connection with the controversy with Osiander and was actually the main point at issue. Melanchthon's views on this point have received virtually unanimous acceptance among Lutheran churches ever since. The Formula of Concord Articles 3 and 8 sustain Melanchthon (and Luther) over against both Osiander and his equally erring opponent Stancar.

Melanchthon was in complete agreement with Luther regarding the doctrine of Scripture, and while neither of them developed a formal statement or locus on the subject, a reading of this edition of the *Loci Communes* will demonstrate their complete harmony. Some have asserted that Melanchthon actually preceded Luther in affirming the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura.* He certainly established the principle when he stated in his 1519 Baccalaureate Theses 16 and 17, "It is not necessary for a Catholic to believe in any other articles of faith than those to which Scripture is a witness," and "The authority of councils is below the authority of Scripture." At another time Melanchthon made the statement, "Every theologian and faithful interpreter of the heavenly doctrine must necessarily be first a grammarian, then a dialectician, and finally a witness." He strongly emphasized both the unity and the literal sense of Scripture.

There is always a great deal of debate and some acrimony over the extent to which Melanchthon, the student of Aristotle, was guilty of injecting philosophy into Lutheran theology. Especially the charge is made that the orthodox Lutheran theologians of the 17th century were much influenced by Melanchthon's espousal of Aristotelianism, which in turn made its way into Lutheran theology in the Age of Orthodoxy. Often Melanchthon is put into an adversarial position toward Luther on this point. Obviously, this is not the place to debate this complicated and technical question. But it is interesting to note the words of Melanchthon in the Preface to this third and most compromising edition of his great *Loci Communes.* He seems quite anxious to avoid philosophy and its influence on theology. Note also his love of good order. He says, "Human beings are so created by God that they understand numbers and order, and in the learning process they are much aided by other numbers and order. Thus, in teaching a subject, the order of the various parts must be demonstrated with singular care, and we must indicate the beginning, the progress, and the goal. In philosophy they call this process the 'method.' In those subjects which are taught using demonstration, this procedure has been accepted, but not in the teaching of the church. For the demonstrative method proceeds from those things which are subject to the senses and from the first understanding of the 'principals.' At this point,

in the teaching of the church we seek only the order but not the demonstrative method. For the teaching of the church is not derived or drawn from demonstrations, but from those statements which God has given to the human race in sure and clear testimonies, through which in His great kindness He has revealed Himself and His will. The material which follows simply corroborates what has been said. Philosophy cannot discover God or describe Him. Only the Scripture can do this."

It would appear that those who are so quick to condemn the great *Preceptor Germaniae* for injecting philosophy into theology should carefully read the Preface in his great treatise on Christian theology, his *Loci Communes.* To this day in many circles the easiest way to discredit an opponent is to accuse him or her of being a Melanchthonian. This is particularly the case when philosophy or Aristotelianism is involved. Thus in the age of the Enlightenment, when people had difficulty believing the literal truth of the Scripture to the extent that Luther and Melanchthon and the orthodox fathers did, it was easy to discredit the Age of Orthodoxy by accusing it of Melanchthonianism for holding to the literal truth of Scripture. Similarly in our era, orthodoxy is attacked by historical criticism in favor of existential subjectivism, relativism, and the idea that there are as many theologies in Scripture as there are authors. Orthodoxy is smeared with the label of Melanchthonianism, accusing it of being too interested in order, unity of thought, clarity of expression, and logic—all of which add up to those nasty terms "Aristotelian philosophy" and "Melanchthonian blight." But in the last decades, as ecumenism has taken center stage and biblical theology has been jettisoned in most mainline churches, Melanchthon is once more back in favor despite Aristotle's baleful influence, because Melanchthon was the most yielding and compromising of the Lutheran reformers.

Because Melanchthon had a strong interest in the philosophy and theology of morality and ethics, it is not surprising that he also believed that the Law of God played an important role in the life of the Christian. As a true believer in justification by faith alone, he ascribed no saving merit to good works and Christian virtues, or even to faith itself. Yet it is important to stress that he strongly believed that the Law of God was meant for Christians as a norm for moral conduct and a guide for their living. This is manifest in his 1521 *Loci Communes,* even before the Peasants' Revolt began. Modern scholars have sometimes asserted that Article 6 in the Formula of Concord on "the third use of the Law" represents an intrusion of un-Lutheran Melanchthonianism into the Formula and late Reformation Lutheranism.

In the first place, Luther himself, despite those who aver to the contrary, certainly did believe in the use of the divine Law for Christian living and morality—the so-called third use of the Law. All one needs to do to establish this point is to take a look at Luther's Catechisms of 1529 or his Treatise on Good Works of 1520, all of which are in accord with Melanchthon's 1521 *Loci.* It was not only the pious Melanchthon who opposed the Antinomian John Agricola; also the rough-edged Luther firmly asserted the need for the Law in the life of the Christian, as his catechisms and many other writings amply demonstrate. A reading of many portions of this third edition of Melanchthon's *Loci Communes* will amply demonstrate his pious and reverent attitude and his desire for moral and upright living—something any sincere Christian should approve.

With his moral concern and his fear that the Reformation doctrine of salvation by grace alone could lead to a corrupting of the morals of the common people, Melanchthon stressed the importance of the Law for Christian living. That certainly is proper, but Melanchthon in the second edition of his *Loci Communes* made the unqualified assertion that "good works are necessary *for salvation* and that good works are the *sine qua non* for salvation." Luther criticized this over-emphasis on works, as did Amsdorf and others. After his meetings and discussions with Luther, Melanchthon finally corrected his language, and by the time of this third edition of his *Loci* he had dropped the controversial words "for salvation," and simply retained the expression "good works are necessary," a face-saving expression which can be understood properly. The controversy was settled as far as Melanchthon was concerned, but it was revived again by his disciple George Major; and the entire matter, including Amsdorf's counter-productive remarks that good works were detrimental to salvation, was settled once and for all in Article 4 of the Formula of Concord. But Melanchthon's reputation was tarnished.

Melanchthon got into much more serious difficulties regarding free will. In his 1521 edition he had followed Luther in every respect. But in his humanism, derived from Erasmus (with whom he belonged to a mutual admiration society, and who was Luther's old antagonist on this point), he came to the place where at least privately he agreed with Erasmus and opposed Luther. This is the clearest departure Melanchthon ever made from the great reformer, and a point on which nearly all shades of Lutheranism oppose him to this day. Even the Reformed theologian Clyde Manschreck feels obliged to try to explain this aberration of Melanchthon. Beginning with his second edition and continuing into the third, and on for the rest of his life, Melanchthon speaks of "the three causes of conversion": the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and the will of man. The reader of this volume will also note under Locus 4 Melanchthon's notorious and repudiated statement, "The free choice in man is the ability to apply oneself toward grace (*facultas applicandi se ad gratiam*)." This deviation from Luther's doctrine on the part of Melanchthon ultimately led to Article 1 of the Formula of Concord, by which time the matter had been argued

for nearly fifty years among the Lutherans. Finally it was settled, and Lutheranism no longer talks of three causes but only of the two causes of conversion.

But the troubles were not ended. For a multitude of reasons which do not need full repetition here, Melanchthon found himself at odds with Luther and with his own 1530 edition of the Augsburg Confession in regard to the Lord's Supper. When we mentioned earlier the various and conflicting opinions of Melanchthon which exist among Lutherans, we had reference particularly to his teaching on the Supper. Most scholars suggest that his weakness on this doctrine and his partial defection from Luther derived from his desire to retain and improve relations with other churches, particularly in the later years with the Reformed. In fact, it also has been suggested that he really had no doctrine of the Supper at all but merely wanted to accommodate his position to that of others. Some suggest that he was actually cowardly and unable to take a stand. Still others opine that on this doctrine he defected from Lutheranism entirely. Others, especially in more recent times, hold that he truly remained a true Lutheran all his life and died one, but used some unfortunate language. It is a certainty that the next generation of Lutherans—those who produced the Formula of Concord and thus bore the heat and burden of the problem—felt that Melanchthon had misled the Lutheran church, that his vagaries had to be corrected regarding both the Supper and Christology. As proof of this position, it need only be observed that whatever Melanchthon actually believed, many of his followers stood much closer to Calvinism than to Lutheranism, and when everything was over, they joined the Reformed church. Even Calvin accused him of pusillanimity in refusing to acknowledge to the world what he had repeatedly confessed to Calvin privately, namely, that he had broken with Luther.

Let the reader of this treatise decide for himself what the facts are. Melanchthon's position, as shown in Locus 13, represents his mature view. He tried to change the Augsburg Confession and its Apology on this point, but the framers of the Formula of Concord would not let him get by with it, and insisted that the Confession of 1530 delivered to Charles V was the official version and the official position of Lutheranism. He tried to get his own statement of faith, the *Corpus Philippicum,* adopted as one of the confessional documents of the Lutheran church, but failed. He did succeed in revising his *Loci Communes* to reflect his changes in thinking. He did influence Hardenberg of Bremen to adopt Calvinism, and ultimately the entire city left the Lutheran Church. He did encourage Frederick the Pious—the ruler of the Palatinate, where Melanchthon himself was born—to leave Lutheranism and lead his territory into the Reformed camp. These facts are beyond debate. There is private correspondence to prove it. And his followers almost succeeded in taking Saxony itself—the cradle of Lutheranism—into the Reformed church. So the most charitable Lutherans have their work cut out for them in attempting to show that Melanchthon was a genuine supporter of "Luther's doctrine pure" on this point. One cannot help recalling the old Emersonianism, "I can't hear what you say, because what you are sounds so loudly in my ears." At any rate, the verdict of the first two centuries of Lutheranism was that Melanchthon had sold out Luther on the Lord's Supper.

Locus 13 in this volume will give the reader a picture of Melanchthon's position on this doctrine. There is very little wrong with what he says. Much of it is laudable and edifying, but he really does not come clean on some of the issues which were of concern to both Lutheranism and the church at large, including the eating by the unworthy, and the actual reception of the body and blood by the communicants. It is almost needless to say that he avoided all reference to the doctrine of Christology, although there is a passing reference to the communication of the attributes of Christ's divine nature to the person of Christ. Thus what he does say, while good and worthwhile, avoids or downplays the points at issue. The spirit and the tone on this doctrine is not at all like Luther's. Just briefly turn, for example, to the Epitome of the Formula of Concord, Article 7, and compare the emphasis of the two documents as well as the irenic vs. the polemic handling of the matter. He does say that "Christ is truly present, giving through the ministry his own body and blood to him who eats and drinks," but he does not stipulate whether this is the physical or spiritual body and blood. He does refer to "the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ." He does cite 1 Cor. 11:29, "He who eats this bread and drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord," and he refers to 1 Cor. 11:27, "not discerning the Lord's body," but the question still remains as to what kind of body is being discussed.

But it is also necessary to state that Melanchthon never, at least publicly, accepted some of the Calvinistic notions, such as that the body of Christ is locked up in heaven. His emphasis was far less polemic than Luther's, and so was his vocabulary. He seems to be saying, "There are many wonderful things about this sacrament; let's talk about them and a little less about how Christ is present." His language was such that a fairly liberal Calvinist could accept it. Many points were settled only by citing Bible verses, but he went into no detail, and many questions were left unanswered. Luther had built nearly his whole case on the Words of Institution. Melanchthon stressed only the biblical reference in 1 Cor. 10:16 to the "communion of the body and blood of Christ."

Thus, while it is hard to convict him of false doctrine on this matter, it is easy to see that he had a different attitude on the entire subject and thus said things quite differently. In 1543 Melanchthon and Bucer jointly prepared a document to use in reforming the

electorate of Cologne. Luther strongly criticized the document because it was silent on whether the true body and blood were physically present. Luther even attacked it from the pulpit. Bucer liked to say that the body and blood were "offered" under the bread and wine. He was not so sure they were received. The use of the word "offered" is common in Melanchthon, but the words "distributed" and "received" were avoided. Melanchthon was not totally forthright in dealing with the Supper. His role in the preparation of the Reformed Heidelberg Catechism also created questions which he never answered.

But this was not yet the end of his difficulties. After the death of Luther, Melanchthon became the titular head of Lutheranism, not by any formal election, but merely by common and general consent. We have mentioned Melanchthon's peace-loving disposition. In many ways he was born at the wrong time and in the wrong place. When difficulties or opposition arose, he had great problems. He was not a leader, though often he was put into a position which required a leader. While Luther was in the Wartburg and Melanchthon was in nominal charge at Wittenberg in 1521–22, he found the Enthusiasts arrayed against him. He failed as a leader, and Luther had to come out of his place of refuge to save the situation. At Augsburg in connection with the Diet which drew up the Augsburg Confession, he was too prone to compromise and even to wheel and deal with the Romanists. At the meeting at Smalcald, he kept the group from adopting Luther's sturdy Smalcald Articles because he felt them too polemical. And he constantly carried on secret correspondence with non-Lutherans and even Roman Catholics, and when this correspondence was revealed (as it often was), it gave him a reputation of being duplicitous.

But the real catastrophe occurred in 1546, a few months after Luther died. The Emperor Charles V, who in many ways was more Catholic than the pope and who had tried for nearly 30 years to solve the religious problems of his empire, finally found the political situation calm enough to enable him to do what he had wanted to do for several years. He declared war on those portions of his empire which had gone over to the Reformation. He even had the help—temporarily—of Maurice of Saxony, a Lutheran prince. And so Charles took his Spanish soldiers and invaded Saxony. A few months after Luther's death, Charles stood at his grave. He imprisoned Philip of Hesse and Elector John of Saxony. He imposed on his poor defeated Lutheran people a document which was called the Leipzig Interim because it was supposed to serve only in the interim until a church council could be held to settle everything permanently. While called only an interim document, it was devastating. It must be said that many parts of Lutheran Germany ignored the Interim stipulations, but wherever Charles had his troops, they were rigorously enforced.

The Lutheran who together with two Roman bishops had concocted this document was none other than Melanchthon's old opponent, that great paragon of orthodoxy and the father of the Antinomian Controversy, John Agricola. The document was so pro-Roman and so anti-Lutheran that even Maurice of Saxony refused to impose it on his people for fear of civil war.

So Charles ordered that certain alterations be made, and that the revised document be imposed. The document designed to accomplish this sad end was called the Augsburg Interim, and none other than our friend Melanchthon, together with several of his Wittenberg colleagues, was ordered to prepare it. The year was 1548, in November. As it turned out, in 1553 Maurice turned on Charles, almost defeated him in battle, and drove him out of Germany. All talk of the Interims and their theology became passé.

Because of Melanchthon's participation in this tragedy and his subsequent defense of his position, he never drew another happy breath for the rest of his life. Many years later, in 1556, he even confessed that he had sinned in this matter, but it did not help. The Leipzig Interim compromised the central doctrine of justification by faith; it required obedience to the pope; and it brought back the bishops, the mass, the seven sacraments, the Corpus Christi festival, popish ceremonies, and the laws of fasting. The only real concession to the Lutherans was the legalization of the marriages of priests who had married after the time of the Reformation, and the use of the cup in the Lord's Supper. Melanchthon tried to pass the whole thing off as something that dealt only with matters of indifference (*adiaphora*). The injection of this unfamiliar Greek word into the controversy gave rise to a whole new controversy, the Adiaphoristic, in which he incurred the wrath of two implacable enemies, Nicolas Amsdorf, who had disliked him for a long time, and Matthias Flacius, a brilliant, intense, persistent, and articulate man who would never let up. It took the Formula of Concord in 1578 to rid Lutheranism of the consequences of this quarrel, but Melanchthon's good name was never restored. Amsdorf died soon thereafter, and Flacius himself fell into error and was condemned on all sides and also in the Formula of Concord. There were some Lutherans who refused to subscribe to the Formula of Concord because Melanchthon was not condemned in it by name. He was forever after regarded as a compromiser, both with Rome and with the Reformed. The Romanists regarded him as a dangerous heretic, and the Reformed as a false friend.

One final note on the problems associated with him. Especially because of his constant dealings with the Reformed and his apparent desire to draw closer to them, he has always been popular with ecumenically-inclined churchmen. Pelikan accused him of unionism. Charles Leander Hill said, "It seems to me that no history of the Ecumenical Movement can be properly written without giving him an exalted position

in the stream of this development." The notorious 17th-century Lutheran syncretist Georg Calixtus, who went far beyond Melanchthon and even many moderns, was raised by a father who was a humanistically-inclined Lutheran pastor and who had studied under Melanchthon and admired him greatly. These two men, Melanchthon and Calixtus, probably more than any others are responsible for the development of the doctrine of church fellowship and related matters within Lutheranism, both in the direction of an over-emphasis on ecumenism by some Lutherans, and among others of a spirit of isolationism, which is manifest to this day.

Yet Melanchthon struggled on. History is still taking note of him, and opinions are still divided. He was in many ways an excellent theologian, and the church of today can learn much good and edifying theology from him. This will become evident to the reader of this volume.

On the positive side, although never ordained, in 1527 he prepared the material for the visitation of the Saxon churches which he and Luther conducted to try to give proper instruction in doctrine to the new crop of Lutheran ministers which was appearing. He was instrumental in winning Philip of Hesse for the cause of the Reformation. He virtually created the German educational system, from the elementary level to the university. He was consulted on the formation and reorganization of several universities. His contributions to the philosophy of Lutheran theological education remain with us even now.

Living under the cloud created by the Interims and the controversies pertaining to the Lord's Supper, Melanchthon nevertheless continued his teaching and writing, influencing hundreds of young future leaders in church and state. He remained popular and influential at Wittenberg until his death. In March of 1560 he contracted a cold while on a journey to Leipzig, and died shortly thereafter. He was buried in the Schlosskirche in Wittenberg next to Luther, and their graves can be seen to this day.

I present this work to the church of the 21st century with the full knowledge that only a beginning has been made. It is my hope and prayer that others—younger and better scholars—will pick up this work and explore farther into the theology and life of this enigmatic, pious, orderly, academic, and somewhat feckless man—the "theologian without honor"—for the verdict is still out.

J. A. O. Preus, Sr.

St. Louis, 1991

Letter of Philip Melanchthon to the Godly Reader

Philip Melanchthon gives greetings to the godly reader.

There is benefit in having firm and clear testimonies regarding the individual articles of Christian doctrine set forth in definite order, as if they were put on a table. Then when our minds are confused or in distress, certain clear statement can be kept in mind which will remove anxieties, direct our minds, and strengthen and confirm them. For these exercises of faith are necessary and not to be ignored, as the prophet says [Ps. 119:105], "Your Word is a light to my feet."

It was for this personal use that in the beginning I produced these *Loci*. In these troubled times, when I seemed to be in need of some explanation, I would from time to time add certain explanations or subdivisions, since after being circulated through many hands they later needed to be enlarged and revised. I began this work and put it together not out of ambition or love of controversy or a sense of rivalry, or to spread strife, but first in order that I might increase my own knowledge, and then that I might give help to the important and godly studies of others who were reading them. But I do not wish to say more than that I hope this work will be approved by God, and that I may be able to express the testimony of my own conscience in the face of the accusations of Eck, Cochlaeus, Alphonsus, and the many others who support them.

I came to realize from this activity that the explanation of the dogmas of the church was a most difficult work for many reasons, and although it was necessary, yet it was full of great dangers. So I listened very carefully to the learned interpreters and teachers of theology. With great care and concern, I investigated the doctrine of the church and tried to state these great truths as clearly as I could. I am not creating new opinions. Nor do I believe that any greater crime can be committed in the church than to play games by inventing new ideas, departing from the prophetic and apostolic Scripture and the true consensus of the church of God. Further, I am following and embracing the teaching of the church at Wittenberg and those adhering to it. This teaching unquestionably is the consensus of the universal (*catholica*) church of Christ, that is, of all learned men in the church of Christ.

St. Paul wills that there be judgments concerning the teaching in the church in order that the truth be kept uncorrupted and that concord not be needlessly destroyed. I recognize the meagerness and insufficiency of my own writings. Although I am anxious to speak clearly and in proper language, yet it can happen—especially in so great a mountain of things and with so great need for brevity—that from time to time something may be said which is a little unclear or less than perfect. Therefore, I am not trying to evade the judgment of our churches. For I truly believe that they are the church of God, and with true godliness of mind I respect them, and I will not separate myself from them. I am submitting my words, my writings, and my actions to their judgment. I have often hoped that others who excel me in learning and judgment would share their counsel and their comparison of my statements about these matters and my forms of speaking. I have hoped that by their great authority they would produce such a work as would include in proper order the chief points of Christian doctrine. I would suggest that this ought to be of concern to godly and wise rulers, especially in such times of great confusion. But we see that the church is not ruled by the counsels of men.

Therefore, I pray to God, the everlasting Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the sake of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, whom He willed to be a sacrifice for us, both as a mediator and our suppliant (*kai mesitēn kai hiketēn*). I pray that He would gather His church to Himself, rule and preserve it, guide the minds of those who teach and those who learn, aid their studies, and turn many to the truth and love of concord. Since Christ in His suffering prayed thus, let us join our prayers and our groanings to the prayer of our High Priest, who prayed [John 17:17], "Father, sanctify them in the truth; Your Word is truth." Do not allow the light of the truth to be extinguished, that is, the light of Your Gospel. And He adds [v. 21], "That they may all be one, even as We are one," that they may first be joined with Us, and then be in harmony among themselves, and then work for the true peace of the church by performing their duties in a righteous manner.

I urge the scholarly community to give consideration to this in the station in which they have been placed by God. May they understand that they are the seed bed (*seminaria*) of the church of God. For from them the Son of God draws the ministers of the church, whom He wishes to be prepared in the school, as He rules at the right hand of the eternal Father and gives His gifts to men, namely, pastors and teachers. He wills that these men be the guardians of the prophetic and apostolic books and the true dogmas of the church. Therefore, we must demonstrate diligence and faithfulness in this matter, which is the most important of all to God, His church, and our posterity. We must seek the truth, love it, defend it, and hand it down uncorrupted to our posterity.

Wittenberg, in the year of our Lord 1543.

Preface of Philip Melanchthon to His Theological Topics

Human beings are so created by God that they understand numbers and order, and in the learning process they are much aided by both numbers and order. Thus, in teaching a subject, the order of the various parts must be demonstrated with singular care, and we must indicate the beginning, the progress, and the goal. In philosophy they call this process the "method." In those subjects which are taught using demonstration, this procedure has been accepted, but not in the teaching of the church. For the demonstrative method proceeds from those things which are subject to the senses and from the first understandings or the "principles." At this point, in the teaching of the church we seek only the order but not the demonstrative method. For the teaching of the church is not derived or drawn from demonstrations, but from those statements which God has given to the human race in sure and clear testimonies through which in His great kindness He has revealed Himself and His will.

In philosophy we seek the things which are certain and distinguish them from the things which are uncertain. And the causes of certainty are universal experience, the principles, and demonstrations. But in the teaching of the church the cause of certainty is the revelation of God. And we must consider what meaning has been given by God to a subject. For example, it is clear to any sane person that "two times four is eight" is a true statement. This is natural knowledge based on the principles. Likewise, we have certain and immovable articles of faith, namely, the divine threats and the divine promises. It is equally certain that whoever repents of his sin has forgiveness for the sake of the Son of God, that his prayer is heard, and that he has been made an heir of eternal life. But the causes of certainty are different. The mind with its own judgment sees the correct meaning regarding the numbers; but the articles of faith are certain because of revelation, which is confirmed by the sure and clear testimonies of God—for example, by the resurrection of the dead and many other miracles. But because these matters are beyond the judgment of the human mind, the assent is more sluggish, although the mind is moved by those testimonies and miracles and helped by the Holy Spirit in order that it may assent.

Even if philosophy teaches that there must be doubt about those things which are not perceptible to the senses and are not principles and are not corroborated by demonstration (so that, for example, it is permissible to doubt or suspend judgment as to whether the only cause of a cloud is a hollowness, or why a rainbow occurs), yet we know that the doctrine given to the church by God is certain and immovable even if it is not subject to the senses, is not innate in us, as principles are, and is not discovered by demonstrations. But the cause of this certainty is the revelation of God, who is truthful.

Therefore we should never permit this philosophic doubt in regard to the teaching which has been given by God to His church. For because of the corruption in nature, great confusion and doubt concerning God still cling to our mind. We must fight against this and oppose it with the thoughts which have been given us by God. We should not cultivate or praise this kind of doubting. But rather, faith is the sure assent, that is, the certainty by which the mind is convinced by divine testimonies and firmly grasps the divine voice about "things which are not seen," as the Epistle to the Hebrews, 11:1, says.

We must make this point at the outset in order that from the very beginning we may understand that the things taught in the church are sure, certain, and immovable, as the Son of God says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away," Luke 21:33. In the second place, we should also understand that faith is a firm assent, a complete embracing of the doctrine of the Gospel. It is not a matter of ambiguous games, opinions, and disputations as in the academy of Arcesilaus,[1] or as many arrogant minds have always judged, do now judge, and will continue to judge. God will punish such blasphemies with present and eternal torments.

Now we need to preface some instruction concerning the order of the various items. The prophetic and apostolic books themselves have been written in the best possible order, and they set forth the articles of faith in the best possible order. There is a historical continuum in the prophetic and apostolic books. There is an orderly account from the first creation of things and the founding of the church; and then in the prophetic books is contained material of all ages from the creation of things to the time of King Cyrus. In this material many cases of renewal and restoration of the church are recorded, and interspersed with these accounts are the doctrines of the Law and the promise of the Gospel. Further, the apostles are witnesses to Christ, His birth, crucifixion, and resurrection. These are historical writings. And Christ's speeches contain the articles of faith, the explanation of the Law and the Gospel. Added to this are the discourses of Paul, who as a master craftsman has developed in his Epistle to the Romans the art of distinguishing Law and Gospel, sin and grace or reconciliation, by which we are restored to life eternal.

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[1] Arcesilaus, 315–241 B.C., founder of the Academy of the Skeptics, opposed the dogmatic theory of learnings.

Now, although there is not much need for commentaries or our books for the person who has come to understand this order, yet, because God wishes the voice of teachers to sound forth in the church, as is said concerning the ministry of the Gospel, Eph. 4:11, therefore the work of teaching is not undertaken in vain. We do not give birth to new ideas or hand down new matters, as Hesiod taught other things than the fathers Shem and Japheth, or as heretics do who mix in new materials which have not been delivered to us by the apostles. But godly interpreters repeat with good faith the material received from God in the prophetic and apostolic account. And because uneducated people do not always understand the kind of language employed, they do not immediately perceive the order of things and need to be instructed by the voice of the interpreter concerning the kind of language and the order of the material. Because of this need, many corruptions have arisen and will continue to arise. Pious pastors and teachers can therefore be witnesses to the correct meaning which has been accepted with definite authority, and they also can refute false interpretations. For these reasons God in His richness has preserved the ministry of the Gospel and restored learning in the churches and schools, so that we are the guardians of the prophetic and apostolic books and witnesses to the correct interpretation of them and are able to refute all opinions which are in conflict with the doctrine handed down through the prophets, Christ, and the apostles, lest the light of the Gospel be extinguished and, as it says in Eph. 4:14, lest the church be tossed about and destroyed by the winds, the truth lost, and various errors creep in, as often happens. The Gentiles, having lost the light of the doctrine of the fathers, were tossed about by horrendous winds of different kinds. They practiced human sacrifice, they worshiped with fertility cults, they prostituted their wives and virgins to placate their idols. And what kind of ravings had befallen the followers of Marcion and the Manichaeans, what blasphemy, lust, and sedition! What vagaries are the present Anabaptists living in, who have caught many of the Manichaean diseases! The ravings of the Mohammedans have their roots in Arius. We see such lunacy as the invocation of the dead and the worship of statues, the selling of Masses, defense of the law of celibacy, and many other aberrations which are defended by Eck, Pighius, and other parasites of the papacy.

The pious should consider these examples of the ravings of all ages and be admonished by the careful words of their teachers, embrace with both arms and with the whole heart the prophetic and apostolic books which have been given to them by God, and cling to the accounts and the witness of the purer ancient church, such as the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, so that they may retain the light of the Gospel and not fall into the lunacies which result when the light of the Gospel is extinguished. But those who zealously read the prophetic and apostolic writings and the creeds, and seek the thinking of the purer church, will easily judge by which human writings they can be aided and can understand what value they will gain from correct explanations of pious men and careful writings and testimonies drawn from pure fountains. God will direct them by His Holy Spirit if they are of good will in this endeavor and judgment, and keep them from falling into the snare of the devil and turn them toward understanding, embracing, and retaining the correct opinions. As Paul says, "It is God who works in you to will and to bring to completion," Phil. 2:13. When He has kindled the will so that with pious desire it seeks the truth, He will help it and guide it so that His labor may be for your benefit and that of others.

Locus 1
God

The human race has been so created and then so redeemed that we as the image and temple of God might celebrate the praises of God. For God wills to be known and worshiped. A clear and firm knowledge of God would have continued in the minds of men if our nature had remained unimpaired. And afterward, after Adam and Eve had been received into grace, there is no greater or better work of man than to have true knowledge of God, to pray to Him, and to proclaim Him, as it says in Ps. 149:1 and Ps. 118:17. Therefore the first and highest concern of man would be to learn the true teaching concerning God, just as also the First Commandment specifically demands this duty. But human minds are wandering, in the corruption of their nature, in a great and tragic darkness, seeking whether there is a God or a providence or what the will of God is. And although it has been impressed on human minds, in accordance with the judgment of both honest men and fools, that there is a God who commands obedience and regularly punishes vicious crimes with vicious punishments in this life, as many clear and undebatable testimonies show, yet our minds are tortured with horrible doubts because they see that good people as well as the evil are often oppressed and burdened down with enormous calamities.

Although in some way the human mind understands that God punishes the guilty, yet it knows nothing about reconciliation without the revelation of the divine promise. Thus we are overwhelmed by our punishments and argue against those things which have accidentally befallen mankind, or we wonder why God has burdened our weak nature with so great miseries. Pericles thought that the pestilence which had befallen Attica had come perhaps primarily from the contagions of nature. He did not recognize that the punishment came from God. Oedipus understood that he was being punished by God but he knew absolutely nothing about the forgiveness of sins.

From these clear testimonies we seek a God who has revealed Himself, and we separate ourselves from the heathen and from all those who are ignorant of the Gospel, and in our prayers we consider which God we invoke and where and why God has revealed Himself. We are not unsettled in our minds as the heathen are or those who run to graven images; nor do we think in a negligent and cold manner concerning the revelation of God, but we realize that it is a great benefit and a sure testimony that He wills to help us. Therefore Paul points us to the revelation of 1 Cor. 1:21, "Since the world through its own wisdom did not know the wise God, it pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe." In other words, because our minds are unsettled, even when we observe the beautiful order which has been so wisely established among all creatures and when we note the instructions which we have received from the Architect of it all, we still remain in doubt about providence, whether we are received by God, whether our prayers are heard or help is given. Therefore, although the voice of the Gospel has gone out by which God reveals Himself, still the largest part of the human race ridicules this as a fable. But some do believe it. They have learned to recognize Him correctly, to pray to Him properly, and they are thus the recipients of eternal life, of righteousness and glory, etc.

Christ leads us to the revealed God in this way. When Philip begged that the Father be shown to them, John 14:8–9, the Lord earnestly rebuked him and said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." He did not wish God to be sought by idle and vagrant speculations, but He wills that our eyes be fixed on the Son who has been manifested to us, that our prayers be directed to the eternal Father who has revealed Himself in the Son whom He has sent, and in the Gospel which has been given by the God who accepts us and hears our prayers for the sake of His Son our Mediator.

Thus from the very beginning God is always proceeding from His secret throne for the sake of our salvation and is always revealing Himself and speaking to us in a fatherly way, delivering to us some word as a witness to which He binds the minds of men, in order that they may be certain that He is truly the eternal God, our Creator, who has revealed Himself through this word and testimony. Thus in the First Commandment He binds the people to the word which sounded forth on Mount Sinai and which served to lead the people out of Egypt, "I am the Lord your God, who led you out from the land of Egypt," Ex. 20:2. All of the marvelous acts which took place in connection with the Exodus are testimonies to the presence of God. This same God gave the promises concerning the Mediator, for whose sake the patriarchs knew from the beginning that their prayers were heard. Thus their prayers were limited to this God who in leading them out of Egypt revealed Himself and gave the promises of the Mediator, as David said in Ps. 110:1, 4. Thus since Christ has been delivered, crucified, and raised again, and since the light of the Gospel has been recognized, we make this witness our own, we keep our gaze on this Son, and we learn from Him these two points: who God is and what His will is.

Thus we wisely and eagerly separate our worship from that of the heathen, the Turks, and the Jews. For true worship differs from false worship particularly in these two very important points: the question of the essence and the question of the will of God. Even

though the Turks say that they worship the one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, yet they reject the true God because they deny that He who sent His Son as the Mediator is the true God. Thus they do not worship correctly. For there is an eternal and immutable rule set forth in John 5:23, "He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father." The Turks err first regarding the essence of God because they create for themselves a god who is not the Father of Jesus Christ.

They err in the second place concerning the will of God, since they are ignorant of His promises and deny that the Son is the Mediator. They remain in unending doubt and cannot be certain that they have been received by God or are heard by Him. Those who remain in this doubt do not worship God but flee from Him and run either into contempt for God or into eternal hopelessness and blasphemy.

On the other hand, the church of God affirms that He is God and Creator of all things who has revealed Himself in the Son whom He has sent, in the Gospel which He has given, and in the great testimonies which He has made and which are recorded in the writings of the prophets and evangelists. Thus a person first judges concerning the essence of God not on the basis of human imagination but on the basis of the Word of God and the sure testimonies which have been revealed to us in the Word. In the second place, concerning the will of God, we know with certainty that the Son of God has been set forth as our Mediator. With wondrous, sure, and indescribable wisdom God accepts and hears us when we pray for the sake of the Mediator. When these distinctions are kept in mind from the very beginning, which indeed must be considered every day in our worship, then we will correctly understand how God is to be sought, recognized, and worshiped, rather than on the basis of speculations such as those gathered together in the commentaries of Lombard.

In order that we may come to a definition of God, I will make a comparison of two of them. One definition is a truncated endeavor by Plato. The other is a complete one which has been handed down in the church and derives from the words of John the Baptist. Plato says, "God is the eternal mind, the cause of good in nature." Now, although this definition by Plato is set up in so learned a way that it is difficult to judge without great effort as to what is lacking, nevertheless, because it still does not describe God as He has revealed Himself, a clearer and more appropriate definition is required. The definition is: God is an eternal mind, that is, a spiritual essence, intelligent, the eternal cause of good in nature, that is, a truthful, good, just, almighty Creator of all good things, of the whole order in nature, and of human nature, all of which are directed to a certain orderly goal, that is, obedience. Plato has included all of these things. But they are still the thoughts of the human mind which, even though they are true and learned and developed on the basis of sure and demonstrable evidence, nevertheless are in need of an addition to tell us what kind of God He has revealed Himself to be. Therefore we must turn to the second definition: God is a spiritual, intelligent essence, eternal, truthful, good, pure, just, merciful, free, immeasurably powerful and wise, the eternal Father who has begotten His Son from eternity as His own image; the Son who is the coeternal image of the Father; and the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son, as the Deity has been revealed in the sure Word; that the eternal Father with the Son and the Holy Spirit created and preserves the heaven and the earth and all creatures; and among the human race, which was created to be in His image and to be obedient to Him, He has chosen for Himself the church so that by this church the one and true Deity might be revealed with sure and certain witness through the Word which has been given by the prophets and apostles, so that He might be recognized, invoked, and worshiped according to that divinely given Word; and all religions should be condemned which devise other gods, and this true Deity should be glorified in eternal life.

This definition more accurately describes who God is, and it leads us to divine revelation, as has always been the case with the church. The first chapter of Genesis testifies that God is an intelligent essence, for it says that God spoke and it was done, Gen. 1:9. The ability to speak is a quality of an intelligent essence, not of a brute. The creation of man testifies that God is of good essence, pure, righteous, and of a completely free will. When man was created, God made him in the divine image and added the knowledge which admonishes man to do good, just, and proper works. He also gave man a free will. After the fall of our first parents these good attributes were marred. Furthermore, the creation itself bears witness to the nature of the eternal essence and its omnipotence, concerning which the Word says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," Gen. 1:1.

The three persons of the Godhead, although in the first chapter of Genesis they are referred to in a rather obscure way, yet are gradually revealed more and more clearly. The Father, by speaking, begets the Word who is the image of the eternal Father. And of the Holy Spirit it is expressly said, "And the Spirit of the Lord was moving over the surface of the waters," Gen. 1:2. But afterwards the teaching was more clearly shown to the fathers and the prophets. David and Isaiah clearly placed the Messiah above the angels and all creatures and called Him God, as in Ps. 45:11 and Is. 9:6.

Finally, in the New Testament the three persons are most clearly revealed in the baptism of Christ, where the Father says, "This is My beloved Son," and the Son is seen standing publicly in the river, and the Holy Spirit sits in visible form upon the Son, Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:9 ff.; Luke 3:21 ff. We should look carefully at this revelation, separate our thoughts about God and

our worship of Him from pagan, Turkish, and Jewish notions, and worship only the eternal Father who has revealed Himself in sending His Son Jesus Christ and in showing His Holy Spirit. Let us worship the eternal Father together with the Son and the Holy Spirit as the Creator of all good things and the One who aids us. We should often think of these things in our worship. How the persons are to be distinguished will be discussed at a later point. But first we must discuss the rest of the definition.

We have said that the creatures were created by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is stated in various places in the Old and New Testaments, such as in John 1:3 in connection with the Logos, and in Gen. 1:2 in connection with the Holy Spirit. Thus we must always keep in mind the principle that the creation of things and their preservation is expressly the work of the entire Trinity, the eternal Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Finally, in the definition of God we must mention the fact that our minds are bound to this God who has revealed Himself in the church. And we should know that He is truly the Creator of things, who in His Word and by sure witnesses has revealed Himself from the very beginning of the world. We should also think of Him as He has revealed Himself. The heathen and the Turks also boast that they worship this God who created the heaven and earth, but they boast in vain because they err in their minds and do not wish to listen to the Creator as He reveals Himself in His Word and by the sending of His Son. Therefore they stray from the true Creator and make for themselves creators according to their own speculations. Thus in every thought about God and in all of our worship we must keep our minds on Christ, who has been sent in the flesh and was crucified and raised from the dead. We must firmly believe that He is truly God the Creator, who has sent this Son and has given the church His Gospel.

I have run through the details of the definition by which we should know those virtues which we have attributed to God, in whom there are no accidental qualities, such as there are in man and the angels, who possess wisdom, righteousness, and goodness as accidents or changeable qualities. But attributes such as God's power are not to be distinguished or separated from His essence. Nor is the attribute one thing and the essence another. The wisdom, truth, righteousness, and goodness of God are not something different, but they are His very essence, which is something which lives and subsists by itself, intelligent, eternal, omnipotent, good, and righteous.

In order that the church might keep this definition of God in mind, as distinct from pagan opinions, Christ has commended it to us in a primary and most notable ceremony, namely, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," that is, I bear witness by this washing which has been commanded by Christ that you have received all things from your Creator, the eternal Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the God whom you know to be reconciled to us through Jesus Christ, the Son of the eternal Father, and in this faith you will call upon Him who rules you through the Holy Spirit and restores you to eternal life, as His divine promises guarantee, for example, Joel 2:28 and John 14:16.

When we think about God, whether in teaching or in worship, we should turn our attention to the doctrine of Baptism and the promise connected with it; and we should consider not only the number [of the sacraments] but the reasons as to why the Son has been sent. We should also consider the promise of reconciliation, His marvelous rule over the saints who are defended by Christ against the devil and are miraculously given life by the Holy Spirit. For even though the devil, who is a murderer, lays intricate traps for the individual Christian in order that he may pluck him off and turn him away from God, yet Christ fights against him on behalf of His sheep, no matter how weak and miserable they are, as He says in John 10:27–28. And whenever we recite the words of Baptism, we should remember the marvelous blessings of God given to us for the sake of His Son.

Testimonies on the Unity of God

The eternal divine essence is one, according to the description which has been set forth, namely, the eternal Father, the Son who is the image of the Father, and the Holy Spirit. And the persons are distinguished whenever the Deity is described within itself: but when it is set in opposition to created beings, we must mention the one eternal essence, as in Deut. 6:4. And pious people should note the name. I have said that the worship of the church must be distinguished from that of the Gentiles. For the people of Israel give a peculiar name to God, namely, Jehovah, in order to distinguish the true God, the Creator who has revealed Himself among this people, from idols and the common deities of the Gentiles.

This God has revealed Himself among the people of Israel, Deut. 4:35. He alone is God, Deut. 32:39; Is. 44:6; Is. 45:5–7. Again, vv. 21b–22; 1 Cor. 8:4–6; Eph. 4:6.

The Three Persons in the Godhead

In this article it is necessary to establish what the word "person" means. Therefore I shall first deal with the definition which is pertinent to this article. A person (as this term is used in the church) is an undivided substance, intelligent and incommunicable. It was sufficient for the ancient writers of the church to be able to distinguish between the terms substance (*ousia*) and person (*hypostasis*), and to say that there is one substance, that is, the one essence of the eternal Fa-

ther, Son, and Holy Spirit, but three *hypostaseis,* that is, three truly subsisting [beings] which are indestructible, unconfused, distinct or individual, and intelligent. For the word *hypostasis* the Latins used the term *persona,* and although the Greek word is clear, yet because the insolence of learned men often upsets even statements which have been correctly formulated, thus quarrels arose regarding the word *hypostasis.* Therefore the Greeks gave way and following the Latins, began at this point to speak of three persons, using the term *prosōpa.* But we shall omit all arguments about words and simply retain the meaning of the church and use those words which have been already used and accepted in the church without any ambiguity.

A fanatical man named Servetus[1] played games with the word "person" and argued that the Latin word *persona* originally meant "a role or a character"; or it referred to the distinction of duties, as when we say, Roscius at one point played the role of Achilles and at another the role of Ulysses; or the role of the consul is one thing and that of the servant another. As Cicero says, "It is important in the state to observe the role of the prince" [Brutus, 20.80]. And this ancient meaning of the term "person" Servetus deceitfully twisted to apply to the article concerning the three persons of the Deity.

But we must flee these ungodly tricks, reject them, and know in this article that the church speaks differently, and that the term "person" refers to an undivided, intelligent, and incommunicable substance. In this discussion it is profitable to keep in mind the baptism of Christ, where this distinction between the three persons is clearly demonstrated. The Father speaks the words, "This is My beloved Son"; the Son stands in the river visibly; and the Holy Spirit is sent in visible form. And to this demonstration we add the clear testimonies of Scripture, which tell us who and of what nature the Son is and who and of what nature the Holy Spirit is.

Thus we must first maintain this distinction: The eternal Father is a person, unbegotten, who has begotten from eternity the Son as the image of Himself. The Son is the image of the Father, begotten from eternity by the Father. The Son afterward, at a particular mornent in time, assumed in the womb of Mary a human nature, as will be described later. The Holy Spirit sets things in motion. He proceeds from the Father and the Son and is sent to sanctify our minds, that is, to kindle new light, righteousness, and a life which is pleasing to God and is eternal for those who are the heirs of eternal life.

Thus there are three persons in the Godhead, immeasurable, coeternal, of the same substance: the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son, who is called the Word and the image of the eternal Father, and the Holy Spirit. There are no other persons in the Godhead.

Now, although all the minds of men and of angels stand in wonderment in admiration of this mystery, that God has begotten a Son and that the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, proceeds from the Father and the Son, yet we must concur in this, because, as has already been said so many times, we must believe concerning God as He has revealed Himself. The heathen wander about in their hearts seeking a god according to their own speculations; but the church knows the eternal and almighty God, our Creator, as He has revealed Himself. Although we cannot probe this mystery to the depths, yet in this life God has willed that there be at least a beginning of knowledge of this subject and that our worship be distinguished from the worship of false gods. He has given in His Word a revelation by sure testimonies. In this Word, like a fetus who draws nourishment in the womb of the mother through the umbilical cord and the organs of reproduction, we sit enclosed, drawing our knowledge of God and of life from the Word of God, so that we may worship Him as He has revealed Himself.

The Son

Now the Son is described thus: In John 1 He is called Word (*logos*). In Col. 1:15 He is called the image of God. In Heb. 1:3 He is called "the brightness of glory," that is, the likeness or image of the substance of the Father. And it is evident that the text is speaking of the divine nature of the Son, because John 1:3 says, "All things were made by Him." In the [Nicene] Creed He is called "Light of Light." A comparison of these designations brings us to these conclusions: The Son is called the image and the Word. He is therefore the image begotten by the deliberation of the Father. In order that it may be possible for us to consider this matter in some way, we must take examples from our own experience.

God has willed that His marks be observed in man. If the nature of man had retained this first light, it would have been a clearer mirror of the divine nature. But now these marks are in darkness but still can be observed. The human mind by thinking paints a fair image of the thing it is thinking about, but we do not pour our essence into these images, and these thoughts are hazy and the actions soon forgotten. But the eternal Father, looking within Himself, begets the concept of Himself, which is His image, one that does not fade away but remains the essence communicated to Himself.

Therefore this image is the Second Person and the designations are appropriate. He is called the Word because He is begotten by consideration. He is called the image because the consideration is the image of the thing considered. He is called "the brightness of glory" which in Greek is more appropriately written *apaugasma,* that is, a splendor which arises from an-

[1] Michael Servetus (1511–53) opposed the doctrine of the Trinity and was burned by Calvin at Geneva.

other light. Thus the Son is the brightness which arises from the light of the Father, as we read in the Creed, "Light of Light." Likewise, the likeness of the substance of the Father, that is, an image which does not fade away but which remains the communicated essence. Therefore just as in the case of human nature we speak of a son as being begotten [*genitum*] of the substance of his father and being similar to his father, so the Second Person is called the Son because He is born [*natus*] of the substance of the Father and is His image. Thus the property which distinguishes the Son from the other persons is that He is begotten and is the image [of the Father]. And this distinction becomes clearer when we add that this Second Person at a certain time assumed a human nature in the womb of Mary. For the Father did not assume a human nature, nor did the Holy Spirit assume a human nature, but the Son is the Christ, that is, the promised Redeemer, one person with two natures miraculously united, namely that eternal image of the Father or the Word and a human nature. For the common custom of the church uses the word "union" in this article.

These are great mysteries and far above all human comprehension. But we know that these holy mysteries have been revealed to the church, in order that we might pray to God properly and consider reasons for this marvelous kindness, that God, by an eternal association, joined a human nature to Himself. Therefore He truly cares for us and loves us and sent this Son that He might be the Redeemer and soften His wrath against sin, as needs to be said repeatedly later.

The Third Person, the Holy Spirit, is said to proceed from the Father and from the Son. This property is attributed to this Third Person. There is also attributed this property that He is the person who is sent into the hearts of the regenerate, that is, the person through whom the Father and the Son kindle the new light that revives new God-pleasing emotions, righteousness, and life in their hearts. And to be sure, the Holy Spirit is then present in hearts when He rules, moves, and kindles them, as is said in 1 Cor. 3:16, "You are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you." This governance and sanctification are called the special action of God. Moreover, just as the Son is begotten by deliberation, so the Holy Spirit proceeds by the will of the Father and of the Son. And it is a property of the will to move things and to love, just as also the human heart does not produce images but spirits or attitudes.

Testimonies

Matt. 28:19—"Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." This passage lists the three persons by name and attributes to each of them equal power and honor. For Christ has willed that the sum of the Gospel be included in this first ceremony. Therefore He at the same time both testifies that we are received by God and teaches who God is, which God we should worship, and what He bestows on us. "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," that is, I bear witness that you are received by the eternal Father and by the Son and by the Holy Spirit, in order that by their mercy and power you might be freed from sin and from eternal death and be given righteousness and eternal life. Therefore you will pray, not as the Gentiles who stray from the true God who has revealed Himself, but you will hold that it is God, the Creator of all things, who by this Word has with sure testimonies revealed Himself from the beginning of the world, made a covenant with you in baptism, affirms that He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and has established the Son as peace-maker and sends the Holy Spirit to begin in you righteousness and life eternal.

You know that the sum of the Gospel is well comprehended in the words of baptism and that they show who God is. "I baptize you in the name," that is, in the invocation and in the command, and unto the acknowledgment and invocation of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. I invoke the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit upon you, bearing witness that you accepted, that you heard, etc. This is the meaning of the words of Baptism.

And since those words confess that the Father is God, is omnipotent, that He is to be addressed in prayer, and the Son and the Holy Spirit are added to share this honor, it is necessary that the power be equal. And since the power is equal, they are *homoousioi.* Furthermore, it is evident that the Father and Christ the Son are distinct persons. Therefore also by the name of the Holy Spirit a distinct person is designated. For if "Spirit" signified only the Father Himself moving or impelling things, it would have named the Father twice and this would be a useless repetition. Basil also wisely and impressively argues for this meaning on the basis of this statement of Christ that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are *homoousioi.* He says, "It is necessary for us to be baptized, just as we receive; and to believe, just as we are baptized; and to glorify, just as we believe the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."

But because here and there prooftexts are scattered throughout the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures, some of which speak only of the Son and some of the Holy Spirit, we must first gather testimonies about the Son. Now there is an especially strong proof in the first chapter of John, who indeed is said to have written his gospel because Ebion[2] and later Cerinthus had spread abroad a Jewish opinion and divested Christ of His divine nature and imagined He had only a human nature.

But before I take up John's gospel I am going to posit two lines of thought drawn from Scripture, which in my judgment have useful and comforting advice for pious souls. First, it is necessary to confess that Christ

[2] For Ebion, cf. Eusebius, H.E., 3.27–28, MPG 20.273.

is the begotten Son of God. For the gospel distinguishes the sons by adoption from the Son Christ. For John calls Christ the only begotten Son in John 1:14, "We beheld His glory, as of the only begotten of the Father." Further, since He is undoubtedly the Son by nature, it is necessary that in Him the divine nature exist substantially. And whatever is beyond the person of the Father in whom is the divine nature, this of necessity is a person. Thus Paul says of Christ: "In Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily," Col. 2:9, that is, this Christ is a divine person, as if he were to say that the deity dwells in Him, not only as in David, effectively and separately, but in such a way that the very subsistence (*hypostasis*) of Christ is divine. For the Greeks use the word *soma* as we in popular speech use the word "person."

The second line of thought is that the entire prophetic and apostolic Scripture with great consensus prescribes that Christ is to be worshiped and addressed in prayer, and it calls for trust in Him. It therefore attributes to Him infinite power, because He is omnipresent, sees into hearts, hears prayers, bestows righteousness and eternal life. Thus it is necessary that the divine nature be in Christ.

Now there are clear testimonies about addressing Christ in prayer and about faith in Christ: Matt. 11:28; John 3:16; Is. 11:10; Ps. 45:11; 72:5, 15; Acts 7:59; 1 Thess. 3:11; 2 Thess. 2:16; Gen. 48:15–16.

In these and similar testimonies the continuous invocation of Christ is spoken of, also when He does not dwell with mankind visibly. Therefore this adoration cannot be understood, as the Jews sophistically reason, of the external sign of honor that is given to one who, as at present, legally rules a political realm. But these passages speak loudly of the Messiah who hears prayers, brings help and preserves His church everywhere on earth and at all times. These are properties of the omnipotent nature. Therefore it is useful to study this doctrine of the invocation of the Messiah in the books of the prophets. And it is evident that the patriarchs, the prophets, and other pious people of the Old Testament, by means of invocation itself, professed the deity of the Messiah, and these statements not only educate us concerning the nature of the Son but also comfort us and rouse us to prayer.

Therefore let this line of thought always be in mind whenever giving instruction regarding the invocation of Christ: We must confess that the divine nature is in Christ. For the invocation ascribes almighty power to Him who is absent, who is not visibly seen. For it holds that He sees the emotions of the hearts of all people throughout the world. Here let us remember also the example of the church, which often repeats the prayer, "Christ, have mercy." This prayer is a confession of the deity of Christ.

Now, I come to John who, as he undertakes to describe the natures in Christ, starts with the divine: "In the beginning was the Word," John 1:1. Thus he names the Son of God, who later assumed a human nature; then John says of Him, "And the Word was made flesh," 1:14. But first, in speaking of the nature that existed before the incarnation, he affirms that the Word is eternal For he says that He was before the creation and says, "All things were made through Him," John 1:3.

And he calls this Word God, saying, "And the Word was God." For the Greek article testifies that the term Word (*logos*) must be given the place of the subject and God the place of the predicate. Nor is there ambiguity in the name "God." For the narrative has been undertaken to describe the divine essence. Therefore the name of God is to be understood not with reference to divine duties which human beings carry out, as is said elsewhere, "I said, you are gods," John 10:34, but most appropriately with reference to the eternal, omnipotent, intelligent, good essence, the founder, as John also says later that all things were created through this Word; he therefore says that the Word is the eternal God and creator.

Good minds understand that this is a firm testimony, and they acquiesce to the voice of the Gospel and do not advance sophistries and corruptions of the Gospel. But some crafty and godless men, like Paul of Samosata and later Photinus, and recently Servetus, wickedly presumed to evade and corrupt this statement of John and held that the word *logos* does not indicate a person, but just as in the case of a human being we do not say that his thinking or speaking is a person but a quality or a passing emotion, so they wanted it to be understood that in John *logos* is not a person but the thought or design of the Father, because it is the Father Himself, just as we say that the intention or the goodness of the Father is the Father Himself.

Finally they accommodated the narrative of John to the example of man as an architect: as in an architect there is an idea of a future work which is not a person but a design and a thought in the mind of the architect, so in God the Creator, they said, there was the idea and the design that He wanted to reveal Himself through the creation of the world and through Christ as an excellent teacher who would transmit the doctrine of salvation and bear witness concerning God. This thought or design, they said, was the Father Himself, and concerning this thought they said that in Genesis it is written, "God said," that is, decreed, proposed. And in John 1:3, "All things were made through Him," that is, all things were created through this thinking of the architect, or through the word which commanded that the things come into being.

But what John says, "The Word was made flesh," they corrupted in this way, that Christ was born of a virgin only according to that design and they said that John was raised up to point out that the Gospel is not a human invention, but the eternal design of God was to send this teacher Christ and through Him to bear witness to the teaching.

Because this sophistic corruption alludes to a human example, because its smoothness deludes by wicked clever notions, and has often brought great ruin, therefore strong testimonies must be gathered which show that here "Word" must be understood as a person. And the chief controversy pertaining to the Gospel of John is whether "Word" here indicates a person, as the universal church of God has always held and maintained. For also then, when Paul of Samosata created a disturbance, the old bishops gathered at Antioch from neighboring regions, men who had been taught by disciples of the apostles, and they refuted Paul of Samosata, and, when he had been condemned, they expelled him from the church.

Gregory, an aged bishop of Neocaesarea, came to the same conclusion. The church of his day judged his doctrine to be most pure. He has left a written confession long before the Council of Nicaea. This confession is found in Eusebius, Bk. 6, p. 173: "One God the Father of the living Word of wisdom that subsists, and who begot His own perfect image, the Father of the only begotten Son, one Lord, the only one from the only one, the image of the Father, the efficacious Word, the eternal Son from eternity, one Holy Spirit, having substance from God, who appeared through the Son as Sanctifier, through whom God, over all and in all, is known."[3]

I have cited this confession not only because it contains a clear testimony of the ancient and purer church, but also because it clearly teaches a difference of the persons. It says that the Son is the image; it says that the Holy Spirit is the sanctifier through whom the Father is known, that is, who kindles new light in hearts, as it says in 2 Cor. 3:18, "We are changed into the same image as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Furthermore, that in John's account "Word" indicates a person is shown first from the account itself, for John later says of Christ, "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him," 1:10. For it is obvious that the world was not made through the human nature of Christ; therefore it is necessary that in the Christ who was born of a virgin there also be and remain a second nature, also Creator with the Father.

Similar passages elsewhere also show the same thing, that in Christ there are two natures, cf. Col. 1:16–17, "All things were created by Him and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." And Heb. 1:2, "By the Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom He also made the world, who is the splendor of brightness and the likeness of His substance, upholding all things, by the word of His power." These passages clearly testify that the divine nature, co-Creator with the Father, is and remains in Christ. Therefore "Word" does not mean a design or thought outside of Christ, nor does it mean a passing word, but rather the nature, Creator with the Father, that remains in Christ. Therefore the Word is a person.

It is also in the epistle of John, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen, which our hands have handled, the Word of life, this we declare," 1 John 1:1–3. Here also it is attested that in the same Christ who was born of a virgin there is and remains that Word which was in the beginning. More passages below that speak of the divine nature in Christ point out the same thing; for example, "Before Abraham was born, I am," John 8:58.

When pious minds—which know that one must believe concerning God as He has revealed Himself—see that these testimonies from the Gospel are clear, they recognize that we must most firmly hold fast to this belief, that in Christ there is the divine nature and that "Word" in this narrative indicates a person, and those who give attention to these testimonies pray to the Son of God.

Let us now also seek out statements of the ancient writers who lived before the time of the Council of Nicaea, concerning whom Servetus perfidiously deceives readers; he cites mutilated passages from Irenaeus and Tertullian, as if they would not have the Word be a person or a *hypostasis* before Christ was born of the virgin; but he does great harm to both. For Tertullian, *Adversus Praxeam,* expressly raises this question: Is the Word a subsisting nature, or (as we now say) a person? And he replies by affirming that the *logos* is a person or a *hypostasis.* And he sets forth this view in a long discourse in which are these words: "Therefore whatever the substance of the Word was, I say call it a person, and I claim the name "Son" for Him, and I acknowledge Him as the Son, and defend Him as the second from the Father" [MPL 2.167].

Irenaeus also openly affirms that the Word was a person before He assumed the human nature. For he says thus, *Adv. Haer.,* 2.2: "I point out clearly that the Word existing in the beginning with God, through whom all things were made, who also was always present with the human race—this one He sent in the last times according to the time set in advance by the Father, united with His image, a man made capable of suffering" [MPG 7.713–16].

Likewise Origen clearly affirms in his *On First Principles* that the Word is a person. "No one should think," he says, "that we speak of some unsubstantial thing when we mention the wisdom of God." And later on: " . . . if, therefore, it has been rightly understood once and for all that the only begotten Son of God is His wisdom subsisting substantially."[4] Later he says the same when he discusses the Incarnation. But even clearer and stronger are the testimonies of Gregory of Neocaesarea and Irenaeus that I have cited above.

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[3] Eusebius, 7.28, MPG 20.322. Cf. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition,* 1975, who supports the authenticity of this confession. Also cf. Eusebius 7.28, MPG 20.705.

[4] MPG 11.1130. Both quotations are on the same page in MPG.

But I return to John, who, when he says, "The Word was made flesh," first testifies that the Father and the Word are not the same person. For the Father does not put on the human nature. For He distinguishes Himself from the Son, saying, "This is My beloved Son." Then, when it is said, "The Word is made flesh," a person must be understood. For as I have shown above, in the Christ who is born of a virgin, the divine nature remains as Creator. Therefore the Word is a person. Likewise, if the Word were only an intention which is the Father Himself, this intention was not made flesh. For the Father is not made flesh, nor can it be said of some passing word that it is made flesh, for it passes on and vanishes. But the Word remains in Christ, who was born of a virgin.

There are, therefore, in the Christ, who was born of the virgin Mary, two natures, the Word and the human nature, so united that Christ is one person. For the church has used the word "union," a term which we also have adopted. For the term "to intermingle," which the ancients sometimes used, must be understood with care lest a confusion of the natures result. Although Origen denied that any similitude appropriate to this union could be suggested yet he compared it to heated iron. Just as fire penetrates iron and is everywhere mixed with it, so the Word, assuming a human nature, shines in all of it, and the human nature, like a kindled light, is united with the Word.

We have already with sufficient clarity refuted the ravings of Paul of Samosata, Photinus, and Servetus when we established that it is necessary that the Word be understood as a person. Then the refutation of Arius is easy. He agrees that the term "Word" indicates a person in John, but later contends that this person is not God by nature. But John most firmly refutes Arius when he expressly affirms that the Word is God; lest there be ambiguity in the word "God," he attributes to the Word that through this person all things were made. Therefore, since this person is the Creator and omnipotent, He is truly God by nature and not only in a nominal sense.

Furthermore, each refutation, that of Paul of Samosata and that of Arius, is strengthened by the following testimonies, which show that in the Christ who was born of a virgin there are and remain two natures, the divine, Creator of things, and the human nature.

In John 20:28 Thomas clearly calls Christ God, saying, "My Lord and my God." This was said in the common Hebrew idiom, whereby the proper name of God is joined, distinguishing true prayer from that of the Gentiles, as in Ps. 19:8, "We will call upon the name of the Lord our God" [Vulgate]. Therefore there was a marvelous and new light in Thomas when he attributed to Christ the name of the true God and when he acknowledged that in Him was not only the human nature but also the divine. Rom. 9:5, "From whom is Christ according to the flesh, who is God over all things, blessed forever." And lest anyone cavil that the name of God is here used in a metaphorical sense, let testimonies be added which attribute to Christ those qualities which are proper to the divine nature, namely, to create, to revive the dead, to sanctify, to hear prayer, to give eternal life, and similar things. John 5:17–19, "My Father works until now, and I work . . . The things which He does the Son does likewise." Again, v. 21, "As the Father raises the dead and gives life, so the Son also quickens whom He wills." In this discourse Christ clearly affirms that He creates together with the Father, sustains creation, preserves the church, returns life to the dead, all of which without any doubt are properties of an omnipotent nature. John 10:28, "I give them eternal life . . . and no one snatches them out of My hand." John 14:13, "Whatever you will ask in My name, that will I do." Here He openly testifies that He answers prayer and does the things which we ask, each of which is proper to the divine and immeasurable nature. John 15:5, "Without Me you can do nothing." These passages testify that Christ is present with, protects, aids, and governs those who pray—qualities which belong to God. Matt. 18:20, "Wherever two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am in the midst of them." To be present everywhere, to answer prayer, and to bring help everywhere—these are properties of the divine nature. John 20:22, Christ gives the Holy Spirit, this also is a property solely of the divine nature. John 10:17, "I will lay down My life, and I will take it up again." John 6:40, "I will raise him up on the last day." Again, v. 62, "What if you were to see the Son of man ascending to where He was before?" John 8:58, "Before Abraham was born, I am." Here He testifies that He existed before He assumed the human nature. John 17:5, "Glorify Me, Father, in Your presence with that glory which I had in your presence before the world was." Col. 1:16–17, "By Him and in Him were all things created . . . and by Him all things consist." Therefore the divine nature, the Creator of things, is in Christ. Therefore later, in Col. 2:9 it is said, "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," that is to say, in others God dwells by His Spirit, kindling the new light and new emotions; but in Christ He dwells not only by His Spirit but also so that by the personal union the human nature is united with the divine. For as now in our time we commonly speak of persons, so the ancient Greeks used the word *sōmata.* Heb. 1:2–3, "He appointed Him heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds, who is the splendor of glory and the image of His substance and upholds all things," etc. Acts 7:59, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." This prayer attributes to Christ that He keeps the souls of the dying and will again unite bodies and soul. 1 Thess 3:11, "God Himself and our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way to You." 2 Thess. 2:16–17, "Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God and our Father strengthen you."

From the Old Testament

Jer. 33:16, "And this is the name which they shall call Him, the Lord our justifier." This attributes to Christ the proper name of God and asserts that He is the justifier. Therefore it attributes to Him the glory which belongs solely to God. Again, no one but God can justify, take away sin and the anger of God, and bring righteousness and eternal life. And even though the Jews craftily evade this passage, yet it is easy to refute them. The prophet clearly says that He is to be called the Messiah, that is, He is to be invoked in this faith that He is Himself God our justifier. The name Messiah applies to this same person in Is. 7:14, "His name will be called Emmanuel, that is, God with us." Still stronger is what follows in Is. 9:6, "His name shall be called wonderful, counselor, the mighty God, the Father of everlasting life." Here too the Jews raise captious objection to the word *El,* but it is certain that God is meant by this word. And the very text that follows refutes their tricks: "The Father of everlasting life." Since Christ is the author and giver of everlasting life after this life, as He says, "I give them eternal life" [John 10:28], it is necessary that He be God by nature. Micah 5:2, "His going forth is from the beginning, before the days of the world." Although this testimony is brief, yet it asserts that the Messiah existed before the creation of the world. Therefore He is eternal and God. Therefore the Fathers recognized Him from the beginning, and knew that He was present with the church, as the statement of Jacob cited above shows. And Daniel speaks with Him, 12:5–12, and though very frightened, he was strengthened, and new light and new life was instilled from Him. And in 1 Cor. 10:4 He is said to have been present with the people in the wilderness. "They drank of the spiritual rock that followed them; and the rock was Christ." Ps. 45:11, "The King will greatly desire your beauty, for He is your God." Here the proper name of God is attributed to the Messiah King. And it is a sweet promise. Although the church in this life is deformed with enormous hardships and still is feeble, yet the Messiah King loves her and declares her to be beautiful. Pious minds sustain themselves with this promise as they wrestle with their infirmity.

Ps. 72:17–19 says that the Messiah is eternal and is always to be worshiped. "His name has been forever and will continue as long as the sun." Likewise, v. 5, "They will fear Him as long as the sun and the moon endure." Worship is given to deity. For it is certain that the everlasting prayer is spoken about by which the Messiah is invoked, also when not seen with eyes, nor is it said only of a gesture by which honor is ascribed to present rulers. In the same passage eternity is also described: "His name was before the sun," that is, before the sun was created, the Son was here. For the Hebrew psalm here uses a notable word indicating without doubt that the Son was born before the creation of the sun.

Ps. 110:1, "The Lord said to my Lord." Hence Christ argues that He is not only the Son but also the Lord of David. Now both in the political realm and in nature a son or a successor is never the lord of the father or of the previous king; e.g., Augustus is nowise the lord of Julius Caesar. Hence the kingdom of the Messiah will not be a state that will perish but eternal life and eternal righteousness, and in Christ there will be the divine nature, which brings eternal life. Likewise, the other parts of the Psalm teach things which must all be adhered to: "You are a priest forever," v. 4. This says that He is an everlasting priest who leads us to the Father and gives eternal life. "Sit at My right hand," that is, rule with power equal to that of the eternal Father. And since the power is infinite, it is necessary that the divine nature be in Christ.

Ps. 2:7, "This day I have begotten You." This is spoken only of Christ. Likewise, John calls Christ the only begotten Son of God, 1:14, that is, the Son not by adoption but by nature. Moreover, He is by nature the Son into whom the substance of the Father has been propagated.

And if someone objects that the divine nature does not suffer or die, but Christ died, the answer is well-known, true, and necessary. Since there are two natures in Christ, the things which are proper to one nature do not hinder the presence of the other nature. Further, these are properties of the human nature, that its members become mutilated, suffer, and die. Therefore Peter clearly said, "Christ suffered in the flesh," 1 Peter 4:1. And Irenaeus with learning and piety says, "Christ was crucified and buried with the Word in quiescence, so that He could be crucified and die" [Bk. 3.19; MPG 7.941], that is, the divine nature indeed was not mutilated or dead but was obedient to the Father, remained quiet, yielded to the wrath of the eternal Father against the sin of the human race, did not use its power or exercise its strength. If you carefully consider this statement of Irenaeus, you will understand that the differences between the natures are reverently described, and that at the same time light is shed both on the greatness of God's anger against sin poured out against Christ and on the humility of the Son who remained quiet and obedient to the Father and did not exercise His power.

And this statement agrees with that in Phil. 2:6–8, "Who, although He was in the form of God," that is, in wisdom and power equal to the Father, "did not insist on using His equality with God," that is, when He was sent to be obedient to God in suffering, He did not act contrary to the bidding, did not use His power to thwart His calling, "but emptied Himself," that is, He did not show His power, "and humbled Himself taking on the form of a servant," that is, putting on mortality with the human nature, "found in fashion as a man," that is, in afflictions, fear, sadness, and sorrow. Therefore the difference between the natures must be maintained, but at the same time let it be known that because of the

personal union these propositions are true: God suffered, was crucified and died; you must not think that the human nature alone is Redeemer and not the whole Son of God. For even though the divine nature is not tortured, does not die, yet you must understand that this Son Himself, coeternal with the Father, is the Redeemer. Therefore rules are taught in this doctrine concerning the communication of attributes, that is, concerning the predication of the properties which are said of each nature in common but in the concrete, namely, that the properties must be understood as being attributed to the person.

Care behooves the pious, for the sake of harmony, to speak in line with the church. And it was not without good reasons that the ancient church approved some ways of speaking and rejected others. Let us then avoid zeal for caviling and retain the forms received with weighty and true authority. This proposition is not true: the divine nature is the human. But this is true: God is man; the Word is man, Christ is man, Christ is God, God is born of a virgin, He suffered, because this person, in which the divine nature has been united by the personal union with the human nature, was born and crucified. They call this form of speaking in the concrete "the communication of attributes," that is, a predication in which the properties of the natures are correctly attributed to the person, so that the Son of God is the Redeemer, not only that the human nature is the Redeemer. Likewise, these statements are true and accepted: The Word was made flesh; the Word was made man; God began to be a man. On the contrary, these statements are rejected: The Word is a creature; Christ is a creature; Christ began to be; Christ was made. The prudent man avoids ambiguity and pitfalls. For the Arians, in talking this way, did not speak of the human nature of Christ as assumed, but held that a second nature in Christ, prior to the human, was created out of nothing, and was not the image of the eternal Father, begotten of His substance, of the same substance as, and coeternal with, the Father.

It is acceptable to say that the Word is man because it is understood that the Word assumed the human nature. "The Word is a creature" is a statement which is rejected, because assumption of another nature is not understood, but the predicate indicates that the Word is created, which is false. I have reviewed these matters in order to remind the learned to use the care in speaking that behooves pious minds and to use the language of the orthodox church.

This answer must also be maintained. Certain things are said about the essence and other things regarding the duties. The Arians cited this passage, "The Father is greater than I," John 14:28, which manifestly speaks of the difference between the one who sends and the one who is sent, about the essence. For since the Jews accused Christ of teaching contrary to the authority of God, it was necessary for Christ to appeal to the authority of the Father, who, He said, had sent Him and given Him the doctrine and the command to teach it. And he says that the Father is greater, because He was the one who sent, the source of the doctrine, the one who approves and defends this doctrine and the church. The Son sent here endured the cross, and the church is full of weakness, but Christ cries out concerning the Father, "The Father is greater than I," John 14:28; "He works with me," John 14:10; He defends this doctrine and His church.

In another place He says, "Father, glorify Me," John 17:5. This statement could have been cited by the Arians, as well as the other, but it distinguishes duties and does not speak of the essence: Now I have been sent to endure the cross and I fulfill My calling. Now then restore to me the glory which I had with You before the creation of the world. And this passage speaks of the essence. John 1:1, "The Word was God."

Often worthy of note is also this response which has to be observed in the writings of the prophets. Some passages refer to the reigning Christ, for example, John 5:19, "The things which the Father does, these the Son does also." Some passages speak of the humiliated and suffering Christ, such as Ps. 22:1, "My God, why have You forsaken Me?" This is not said of the essence but it describes His obedience at the time when God poured out His wrath upon the Son against the sins of the human race. And this rule must be maintained that the Son of God assumed the human nature complete and uncorrupted, which had all the proper and inordinate powers and drives of nature. Likewise it was not sinful, but still capable of suffering without sin, and mortal. He willingly assumed these infirmities for us in order that He might become the sacrifice. Thus it is said in Heb. 4:15, "We do not have a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but was in all things tempted like we are, yet without sin."

Therefore, although Christ saw the Father and was blessed, yet His human nature had its drives, but He kept them under control. And these are often listed: He was hungry, He thirsted, He was happy, He became angry, He grieved, He wept, He was afflicted with great sadness, as He Himself says, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death," Matt. 26:38. And because the emotion of the heart in sorrow beats us down, as we all experience, so great was the emotion in Christ that blood was expelled and sweat was like drops of thick and coagulated blood. For this is the meaning of *thromboi* in Luke 22:44. No one else could have endured such distress. These feelings in Christ were not feigned but true and great emotions.

Nor should we think that Christ was a stone or a stoic, but He truly was happy and truly suffered anguish, and this great suffering in agony had many causes; not only does He fear lacerations of the body, but He feels an even greater burden, namely, the wrath of God against the sins of the human race, which He knew to be poured out on Him just as if He had defiled Himself

with all horrendous sins. Likewise, He mourned over the huge number of people who were going to perish, having spurned this blessing of God. We can neither understand nor endure such great sorrows. But still for the church to be nourished, it is necessary to think about these important matters because it is burdened by the cross in order that it might recognize how great the anger of God is against sin.

Therefore, since exceptional wrath was poured out on the Son, it was necessary that the sorrow be tremendous with which He grieved that God is offended by the human race, and He wrestled with temptation caused by rejection. Therefore an angel was sent to strengthen Him. These things must be pondered so that we might in some way thereby estimate the magnitude of sin and give thanks to Christ for undergoing the punishment for us and at the same time being made intercessor for us. And with this consideration let us stir up faith, prayer, and fear.

But some dispute whether escape from death was incomplete in Christ, since the inferior part did not yield to the superior. My first reply is that wounds in the flesh naturally produce pains, even without sin. Again, some of the sufferings in heart and will are natural, in Christ they were without sin; He suffered, but not, like we, inordinately.

In the second place, beyond that natural sorrow there is in Christ also the feeling of the wrath of God against the sin of the human race. He knows and grieves that God is rightly and horribly offended because of the sins of the human race, and He wrestles with temptation over rejection [by the Father]. Therefore, although in this wrestling there is a certain trepidation because nature universally cries out when it is burdened beyond its powers, yet this trepidation or this groaning is different in Christ than in other men. Christ bears terrors without resentment against the Father, and He recognizes that He must be obedient to the Father. Therefore this trepidation is without sin and is in no way an evil thing. But in other men, when escape is possible, there is an outcry against the judgment of God, and those who do not overcome by taking refuge in Christ's victory add horrible blasphemies. I shall not prolong the debate, for their tribulations will lead the pious to a knowledge of these things. But it is helpful that we be reminded, and a comparison of similar struggles in the Psalms and the prophets will shed some light on this matter.

But some say regarding this struggle that a blessed one, since he is in supreme happiness, is not at the same time in great consternation. But it must be replied that there was a certain time of suffering when He did not so shine with that glory of blessedness as at another time. For there was a time destined for this agony, in which Christ truly was the victim, while the Word was quiescent, as Irenaeus says. Let us be content with this distinction of the circumstances. Others look for other answers, the judgment of which I leave to the readers.

The Holy Spirit

The term "spirit" in general refers to the state of being in motion, or nature, or a moving force; and we must take note of the variety of uses in the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures, so that we do not carelessly mix up all these different ways in which the term "spirit" is used. Sometimes it means winds, sometimes the life spirit of man, sometimes it refers to movements or forces created by men, both good and evil. In this case it refers to a spiritual essence, that is, a living, intelligent, incorporeal, efficacious being. God is a spirit. In this setting the term is applied in common both to the Father and other persons of the Godhead. Therefore, we must be selective in gathering prooftexts and judge prudently when Scripture is actually speaking about the Holy Spirit, whom the Gospel announces has been given to us through Christ in order to sanctify and vivify our bodies, and whom the church confesses is a divine person, who makes alive and justifies.

And so it is to be affirmed that the Holy Spirit is a person. For many impious and bold men in various churches have contended that the Holy Spirit is not a person but merely signifies a motion created within people, or certainly signifies the powerful Father moving without another person [being involved].

To this blasphemous sophistry the true church brings in opposition passages given us in Scripture, the first and clearest of which is the divinely given revelation set forth in the baptism of Christ, where we can clearly discern the three persons. The Father says, "This is My beloved Son," Matt. 3:17. There is thus one person of the Father and a second of the Son. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove. Now if the Holy Spirit were only a motion created among animate things, He would not appear in a special bodily form; or if it were the Father Himself, John would not have specifically designated the Holy Spirit when he says, "Upon whom you see the Holy Spirit," John 1:33.

So also at Pentecost the Holy Spirit appeared in a particular bodily form. These revelations did not take place in vain; indeed, they are preeminent blessings from God in which God reveals Himself to the church and testifies that the Holy Spirit is a person.

To these testimonies are added passages concerning Baptism: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," Matt. 28:19, that is, I bear witness that you have been received by God whom I invoke upon you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Further, since prayer is directed to the Holy Spirit, just as to the Father and the Son, the Spirit must be a person and not merely some motion or stirring created in man. For in no way does Christ teach us to invoke motion or stirring created in man. Therefore when prayer is directed to the Holy Spirit equally with

the Father and the Son, this point teaches that not only is the Holy Spirit a person, but He is also omnipotent, He hears our prayers, and He saves us. All these elements are included in a prayer which attributes equal honor to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Thus the Holy Spirit is the Third Person and is to be distinguished from the Father and the Son, as we have said above, in that He proceeds from the Father and the Son and is sent into the regenerated hearts by the word of the Gospel, so that with new light they confess and invoke God, and eternal life is begun in them whereby in faith they find consolation.

John 14:16, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter." When He speaks of another, He is distinguishing this Comforter from the Father and the Son. Thus the term "Spirit" does not indicate the Father Himself in motion. For that would not be "another." Nor does it signify some created motion. For He would not be sent from the Son if it were the Father in motion or only some motion created by the Father. But Christ says, John 15:26, "When the Paraclete comes whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father," He is saying that the Holy Spirit is sent by the Son Himself. Thus the Holy Spirit is neither the Father in motion nor only a motion created by the Father.

This person also possesses properties. "There is another who will teach you and will speak the things which He hears," John 16:13. If the term "Spirit" only signifies a created stirring, then the teaching would be that there is not another teacher who hears and receives from the Father and the Son.

Thus also Paul, in 1 Cor. 12:8, clearly distinguishes the Holy Spirit from His created gifts, the author from his effects, saying, "The one and the same Spirit works all these things," v. 11.

He speaks in the same way in Rom. 8:16: "The Spirit Himself bears witness to our spirit." Here also he distinguishes the moving and comforting Holy Spirit from the comfort with which the heart is guided and made alive.

Likewise in 2 Cor. 3:18, "We are changed by the Spirit of the Lord." Here he also distinguishes the one who produces the light from the light which has been created in us, when he says, "We are changed into the same image by a clear and firm knowledge," that is, by strong faith and prayer.

In the same passage he expressly says, "The Spirit is the Lord," that is, God. For when he says, "The Lord is the Spirit," v. 17, the article attributes to the word "Spirit" the position and the intellect of a person. Basil cites this passage with the same meaning.

Moreover, that the Spirit existed before the Son of God took on flesh, is clearly testified to by Peter when he says, 1 Peter 1:10–11, concerning the prophets, "The Spirit of Christ who was in them prophesied that Christ should suffer." Here He is specifically called the "Spirit of Christ" who was in the prophets. Thus by the same Holy Spirit both the fathers and the apostles and pious men down through the ages, that is, all the elect in all times, have been sanctified.

Even more clearly the words of Is. 59:21 shed light on this teaching, " 'This is My covenant with them,' says the Lord: 'My Spirit who is upon you and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart out of your mouth, nor out of the mouth of your seed,' says the Lord, 'henceforth and forever.' " He is saying that the same Spirit is in Isaiah and in the whole church to all eternity. Therefore, not only after the resurrection of Christ was the Holy Spirit to be poured into the hearts of the saints, but always all the elect have been sanctified by the same Holy Spirit. Indeed, the statement of Isaiah offers us the sweetest teaching and comfort. It affirms that the church of God shall remain forever, and will remain wherever the voice of the Gospel sounds, and with that voice the Holy Spirit accomplishes His work. In Zech. 7:7 it speaks of the "words which the Lord of Hosts sends by the Holy Spirit through the hand of the former prophets." By this statement both points are affirmed, that the prophets are governed by the Holy Spirit and that the Word of God is not proclaimed in vain but the Holy Spirit is present with it and by this Word He moves and kindles our minds. This is something which must firmly be established for the faithful, in order that they may know that God is truly efficacious through His Word in the minds of believers and that He lights in them the flame of eternal life. Note Gal. 3:14, where it says, "That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." I will say more on this matter in the following section.

Thus also in Is. 63:11 ff. the prophet states that the Holy Spirit was the leader and guide of Moses and the people in the desert, by which he signifies that the Holy Spirit has always been present in the church of God. Cf. John 14:16–17.

These words show that the teaching concerning the Holy Spirit existed in the church of the patriarchs and the prophets. Therefore, even the ancients understood this statement in the Book of Genesis as referring to the Holy Spirit, who is a person in the Godhead, "And the Spirit of God was moving over the waters," Gen. 1:2. Basil understands it this way too, that what is even more true, and has been stated by those who came before us, is said of the Holy Spirit. Scripture observes this point, that when the term "Spirit of God" is used, the Holy Spirit who is the Third Person of the Trinity is understood. If you understand the statement of Moses in this way, it will be of greater value to you. For how does He move above the waters? I will tell you the words of a certain Syrian who said that the term used here has the same meaning as to keep something warm with one's vital or body heat (*foveo*), as a setting hen warms her eggs. Thus far Basil.

The testimonies drawn from the New Testament are even more illustrative. But, however you explain this statement in Genesis, it still means that the church

is moved by the Holy Spirit who warms, nourishes, teaches, and kindles in her light and prayer. This we must cling to with firm faith, as it says in Acts 2:33, "Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father in order that He might give His Holy Spirit." Cf. Eph. 4:8. Therefore in this faith let us pray that the Son of God may rule over us through His Holy Spirit.

I have reviewed the testimonies which convince us that the Holy Spirit is a person. To these passages I should add 1 John 5:7 [Textus Receptus], "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one." The words which he uses, "bear record," instruct us to confess that He reveals Himself as God. God testifies concerning Himself as to who He is and of what nature, namely, that He is the true God, the creator of things, the preserver and helper. He bears witness concerning His teaching, concerning His will toward us; and He affirms that there are three in heaven who bear this witness.

Therefore we should cling to these testimonies which distinguish among the persons. The Father reveals Himself and distinguishes Himself from the other persons when He declares, "This is My beloved Son," Matt. 3:17. Cf. John 12:28. The Son testifies concerning the Father, concerning Himself and concerning the Holy Spirit in His teaching, which He also confirmed with miracles and by His own resurrection. The Holy Spirit is distinguished because with a special appearance He is poured out on Christ and the apostles, and He later testifies in invocation and confession and with miracles, by giving strength to bear torments, etc. Thus, it is not in vain that John mentions the testimony; and therefore he speaks this way in order to instruct us to understand God as He has revealed Himself and to strengthen ourselves by the study of these testimonies.

Although there are clearer statements in the New Testament, yet there are testimonies in the prophets which agree with them. The divine person is indicated in this statement of Joel 2:28, when God says, "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh." The fact that He uses the word "My" shows that it was not some created movement which had been sent, but something of the essence of God. Further, it is necessary that He be a distinct person which is a part of God, and yet is not the Father. Moreover, how great the mercy, how great the love toward the human race that God has poured out upon mankind this heavenly fire of His love, a fire which is consubstantial with Himself!

Basil has gathered the testimonies of many writers whose authority in the church previous to his time was preeminent, and it is useful to recall these. For believers will be strengthened in their faith when they hear that this teaching has been handed down with the clear testimonies of the pure and true ancient church, just as has been written in regard to hearing the church, "If you had not ploughed with my heifer, you would not have found out," Judg. 14:18.

But among other statements is this saying by Eusebius of Palestine, "Calling upon the holy God, the creator of light, through our Savior Jesus, with the Holy Spirit. "These words show that the ancients clearly included the three persons in their prayers, and used that form of speaking concerning the Son so that the souls of men were admonished at the same time both by the intercession of the Mediator and by His promises. Here pertains also the passage which we confess in the creed: "I believe in the Holy Spirit." For as has been said above, "I believe in God the Father . . . and in Jesus Christ," a form of speech with which we address the persons and beseech good things from them and rest with confidence in the help of the Father and the Son. Thus, when it says in the creed, "I believe in the Holy Spirit," a person is understood, and we pray that the Comforter (*paraclētos*) may be sent into our hearts, that He may guide and direct us in all the perils of life, as He led Moses through the Red Sea, as Isaiah tells us in 63:11 ff.

Up to this point I have reviewed the true and saving doctrine of the persons, and because I have pointed out that the witness of the true church must not be ignored, serious-minded people ought to read the histories and discover in which councils these teachings have been faithfully defended and described. The Council of Antioch refuted John of Samosatenus; Nicaea developed the Nicene Creed and shed particular light on the statement dealing with the two natures in Christ. Constantinople defended the article that the Holy Spirit is a person proceeding from the Father and the Son. Ephesus condemned Nestorius, who imagined that there are not two united natures in Christ but that God the Word (*logos*) stood beside Christ as a friend stands beside his friend. Chalcedon condemned Eutyches, who confused the natures and tried to argue that the human was changed into the divine, so that just as the wine was made from water, there was no longer the two united natures. These are the major church councils whose judgments we remember and embrace.

On the other hand, we should also in the histories consider what uproars often arose in opposition to the true teaching concerning the essence of God. Marcion and the Manichaeans imagined that there are two gods, equally eternal, contending with each other, one good and the other evil. The good they called "light" and the evil "darkness." They said that good natures were created by the good god and that defective matter was made by the evil god.

We must learn to refute these monstrous notions. For there is one Creator of all things, and He is good, as we have said above in defining God. In Is. 45:6 ff. we read "There is no other God beside Me. I form the light and create darkness," the creatures of the dark, "I make peace and create evil," that is, harmful bodies.

Let us also flee from the monstrous errors of the Valentinians, who imagine that there are countless

gods; or they pile up mere names in an allegorical fashion, as Hesiod piled up the names of Chaos, Night, Erebos, Saturn, Jove, and others; or they actually believed that there were countless eternal gods because it seemed a matter of wonderment that one individual should dwell in eternal solitude. From the very beginning of the world the devil has spread and continues to spread his horrible insanity that brings shame upon the true God and insults Him with the weakness of mankind. Against these ravings God has given to us the sure and certain teaching through the patriarchs, the prophets, Christ, and the apostles, and through this light He wills to rule His church and to allow no other opinions. As a baby lies protected in the womb of his mother, so we know that we are enclosed in the Word of God until the time when we have emerged into eternal life. Then we will behold God face to face. Meanwhile we give thanks to God because He has revealed Himself to us, and we reverently accept this revelation.

We should know that there are not more persons in the Godhead than three; that one is the coeternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; that one is the Son, Jesus Christ the eternal image of the Father; and that one is the Holy Spirit; that these three persons are nevertheless consubstantial (*homoousios*) with one another and at the same time have created all things. We must learn that there is a difference, as we have detailed above, and we must understand the blessings which belong to each of the persons. Because God reveals Himself in this way, He wishes to be known in this way and the persons to be distinguished. The Father is the source of all blessings; the Son is properly the mediator and reconciler, and has been made the sacrifice for us when He assumed the human nature. The Holy Spirit is sent into the hearts of believers in order to kindle new light, righteousness, and eternal life, as when Zechariah calls Him "the Spirit of grace and prayer," 12:10, that is, the one who testifies within us that we have been received into grace and who moves our heart to believe this and stand firm in it. Likewise, He is the one who moves us to prayer because we believe that He has already heard us.

This doctrine of the three persons is daily confessed in our prayers, in which we ardently and above all must petition that God rule our hearts so that we believe rightly about Him and invoke Him correctly and in no way wander away from Him, as the Gentiles and modern Jews, Mohammedans, heretics, Marcion, the Manichaeans, the Valentinians, the Samosatenians, the Arians and other fanatics do.

Therefore we must cling to a certain definite and true form, the very recitation of which admonishes us concerning the true doctrine: O omnipotent, eternal and living God, the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, You have revealed Yourself in Your measureless goodness and have shouted from heaven concerning Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, "Hear ye Him," Matt. 17:5. O Creator of all things, You are our preserver and helper, with Your coeternal Son, our Lord Jesus Christ who reigns with You and was revealed in Jerusalem, and with Your Holy Spirit who was poured out upon the apostles. O wise, good, merciful judge and fortress, You have said, "As I live, I do not wish the death of the sinner, but that he be turned and live," Ezek. 33:4, and You have said, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you," Ps. 50:15. Have mercy upon me and for the sake of Your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, whom You have willed to be the sacrifice for us, as well as our mediator and our advocate, sanctify, rule, aid, kindle also my heart and soul by Your Holy Spirit in order that I may truly confess You, call upon You and truly believe in You, give You thanks and obey You; rule and preserve Your church, as You have promised when You said, "This is My covenant with them: My Spirit is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart out of the mouth of your seed forever," Is. 59:21: Always let the light of Your Gospel shine upon us and rule and strengthen our hearts by Your Holy Spirit lest we run into the ravings of the Epicureans and fanatics; govern the endeavors of Your church and defend governments which show kindness to Your churches.

In daily prayer of this kind we ponder over the essence of God, His revelation, His blessings, and His promises. For at the same time as we meditate we also are instructed concerning the persons, our faith is kindled, and our prayers are necessarily distinguished from those of the Gentiles, the Jews, and the Turks. For no prayer is pleasing to God unless it be with the knowledge and faith in Christ the mediator, as it is written, "Whatsoever you ask the Father in My name" (that is, by using My name, you show that I am the intercessor), "He will give you," John 16:23. Likewise, "No one comes to the Father but by Me,"John 14:6. Moreover, we will find that this true invocation, which is delivered to us in the Gospel, is not without effect.

Our mind and eyes should give careful attention to revelatory actions which shed light on the subject, such as, the baptism of Christ; Christ raising the dead; and after His resurrection how He showed Himself to many people in familiar conversation; and also the sending of the Holy Spirit. These visible testimonies are so clear that they teach the church and strengthen it; and because these things have been demonstrated, God wills that we study them and understand them. His deity did not reveal itself at that time only for the sake of John the Baptist, but by means of this testimony God wishes to strengthen the entire church both of that time and of later ages. Indeed, He even taught the angels to marvel at the sight of God proceeding from His hiding place and showing Himself to His church. These testimonies, together with our thoughts on them, kindle the flame in our hearts, so that they more firmly believe that God is present, receives our prayers and helps us as He promised. For it is necessary that this faith be added to our prayers.

Likewise, let us reverently use this form of prayer which is directed to the Mediator, a form which also includes the three persons: Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, crucified and raised again for us, You who rule at the right hand of the Father in order that You may give gifts unto men and become the one who intercedes for us; have mercy upon me and intercede for me with Your eternal Father; sanctify me by Your Holy Spirit, as You have promised, saying, "I will not leave you desolate," John 14:18.

We also reverently use this form of prayer: Holy Spirit who has been poured into the apostles, whom the Son of God our Redeemer has promised to us in order to kindle in us the true knowledge and worship of God, as it is written, "I shall pour out on you the Spirit of grace and prayer," Zech. 12:10; arouse in our hearts the true fear of God, true faith, and an understanding of His mercy which the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has promised to us for the sake of His Son; be our Comforter in all our deliberations and dangers, and kindle our minds so that with true obedience we may ever worship the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and His Son our Redeemer, and You the Holy Spirit.

If in our prayer we think this way about the persons and their benefits, our minds will grow in learning and devotion. In summary, let the studious know that the designations of power and virtues are common to all the persons, as well as such titles as wisdom, goodness, righteousness, mercy, strength and purity. Nor are these virtues distinct from the essence. For just as the power of the Father is the Father Himself, so the righteousness of the Father is the Father Himself and so the righteousness of the Son is the Son Himself. We must consider how these titles are used in the prophetic Scriptures and we must be careful in speaking properly and correctly.

Locus 2
Creation

God willed to become known and to be recognized. Therefore He created all creatures and in the process used great artistry to convince us that things do not just exist by accident, but that there is an eternal mind, an architect, a good and righteous One who watches over and judges the deeds of men. But, although this consideration of universal nature does indeed teach us about God, as I shall discuss again later, yet at the very beginning let us direct our mind and our eyes to all of the testimonies by which God reveals Himself to His church—to His leading out from Egypt, to His voice sounding at Sinai, to Christ raising the dead, His own resurrection and ascension into heaven, to the voice of the eternal Father saying about Christ, "Hear Him," and to the sending of the Holy Spirit. These testimonies have been published and set forth so that in the weakness of our nature they may more clearly teach, strengthen, and convince us. Therefore our minds should always be fixed on a consideration of these testimonies, and having been strengthened by them, our minds should meditate on the article of creation and finally should consider the evidences of God which have been left in nature.

Now the article of creation set forth expressly in Genesis 1 and in many other passages states that God, the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, together with the co-eternal Son and the Holy Spirit, created out of nothing the heaven and the earth, the angels, men, and all other physical things. Thus it is also said of the Son in John 1:3, "All things were made by Him" (that is, the Son). And concerning the Holy Spirit in creation it is said in Ps. 33:6, "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the power of them by the breath (*Spiritus*) of His mouth. "Furthermore, that things were created out of nothing is taught by this statement: "He spoke and it was done; He commanded and it was created," Ps. 33:9. Under the speaking or commanding of God things came into being. Thus they were not made of some previously existing material, as the Stoics with their two eternal principles, mind and matter, have imagined. But when God speaks, even though things do not exist, they come into existence, and when John says, "All things were made by Him," he is refuting the Stoic notion which imagines that matter was not created. We must keep these things in mind in the church regarding the article of creation.

But not enough has yet been said about this very important article. The weakness of humanity, even if it recognizes that God is the Creator, yet afterwards imagines that just as the carpenter leaves the ship when he has finished building it and turns it over to the sailors, so God left His work and put it into the hands of His creatures to govern it properly. This notion shrouds our minds in darkness and creates only doubts.

Some, such as the Stoics, have the idea that God is bound to secondary causes and that nothing can take place except what secondary causes produce. Others, like the Epicureans, believe that all things are in a state of flux and confusion by mere accident. Both errors create great doubts in people's minds. [If we think this way, then] whenever we are in dangers which are beyond human understanding, we [will] think of the causes only in terms of nature, with the result that we [will] believe that evil is incurable because we think that nature functions this way without the working of God.

In the face of these doubts we must strengthen our minds with the correct thinking about the article of creation, and we must establish the fact that not only have things been created by God but that the substance of things is forever preserved and sustained by God. God makes the earth fruitful with annual crops, He produces fruit from the earth. He commands life to living things. This sustaining or preserving of things is commonly called "a general action of God" which yet does not so bind Him to secondary causes that He can do nothing else except that which the secondary causes put into motion. But God is a totally free agent; He preserves the order of His work, and yet for the sake of man He mitigates many things. The nature of things yields to the prayers of Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, and all pious people, as Christ says in Matt. 21[:22, 21], "All things which you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive. If you say to this mountain, 'Cast yourself into the sea,' it shall be done." Likewise, "Cast your cares upon God, and He will sustain you" [Ps. 55:22].

God is present with His creation. He is not present as a Stoic God, but as One who acts in complete freedom, sustaining His creation and governing it with His measureless mercy, bestowing good things upon it, aiding or restraining secondary causes. The earnest-minded must be cautioned on this distinction. Thus we must cling to the testimonies which show us that God is present with the nature of things and that He governs and guides nature, so that we are not torn apart in our difficulties by either Epicurean or Stoic ideas; so that we do not think that we are under the oppression of blind chance or that the order of causes is a matter of fate and immutability or that secondary matters are only left to chance or to physical causes. But rather we confess that God is truly bestowing His blessings and governing nature. Acts 17:28, "In Him we live and move and have our being," that is our life is given through Him, sustained and nourished. Heb. 1:3, "Upholding all things by the word of His power." Col. 1:17, "By Him all things consist." 1 Tim. 6:13, adds a descriptive

expression about God, "He gives life to all things." 1 Tim. 4:10, "We hope in the living God who is the Savior of all men, especially of them who believe," that is, He gives blessing to all, protecting our life, causing the fruit to grow, preserving the human race. He does this in order to gather His church, and especially to aid it. And in the church He not only nourishes our bodies but bestows even greater eternal blessings. Cf. 1 Tim. 6:17; Matt. 10:29–30; Ps. 104:27–30; 145:15–16; 33:13, 15; 147:8; 36:6. Many special promises have been made to the church concerning its life, by reason of His sustenance and protection of the body, and these promises testify that God is present with His creatures to sustain us and *mitigate* the accidents of nature, Ps. 33:18–19; 34:10; 37:19; Hos. 2:8–9. The same verses teach blessings and judgments. Cf. Deut. 28:11; 30:20; Prov. 3:33; 10:22. Ps. 127:1, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." Here he clearly affirms that secondary causes are vain unless they are aided by God. Ps. 100:3, "Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who has made us and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture," that is, we are not born by accident, nor do we live only under secondary causes, by our own thoughts and powers, but we live with God, who gives us life and preserves us.

Finally, the Lord's Prayer teaches us the same thing when it commands us to seek our daily bread from God. Thereby we are confessing that God bestows our food upon us and that the earth does not yield her increase unless God makes it happen.

I have gathered together a small collection of pertinent testimonies which describe the article of creation and affirm that God is present with His creatures as our sustainer and ruler; and these passages refute the Epicureans and the Stoics. For because God has promised good things to the faithful and to those who ask for His blessings, and because He threatens the ungodly with punishments, it is an established fact that He acts in freedom and is not bound to secondary causes, but rather softens many obstacles for the sake of the faithful and makes many situations worse because of the ungodly. There are many examples of this. Because of Ahab's practice of idolatry it did not rain for three years in his reign, but the rains returned when Elijah prayed.

This kind of testimony should strengthen our desire to pray. For we cannot ask God for food and protection for our lives if we are bewitched by the opinions of the Stoics and the Epicureans and believe that all things happen either by chance or that God does nothing to set bounds to secondary causes. Thus God will take His fruit away from men if they think that these blessings are produced only by some natural power, or that it is not God who nourishes them, or if they do not reverently use the gift when it is given to them, or do not honor the Giver, as Hosea warns in his statement which I have cited above.

The human mind is convinced by demonstrations and proofs to confess that this world has been created by God. But that God is present as the ruler and guide, even though there are very strong arguments for this statement, such as the punishment for especially wicked crimes, this point is less accepted. Thus it is more difficult, even though our faith is aroused and strengthened in our hearts by the testimonies of God's Word, for us to agree to pray to God and seriously ask things of Him or expect good things from Him as He commands, saying, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you" [Ps. 50:15], or again, "Commit your way unto the Lord and He will accomplish it" [Ps. 37:5].

And after the intention of God has been established and the true and correct understanding concerning God, creation, the presence of God among His creatures, and His mitigating of secondary causes has been confirmed by the Word of God and clear testimonies by which God has revealed Himself to the human race, as in the exodus of the people from Egypt, the raising of the dead, and other miracles performed by the prophets, Christ, and the apostles, then it is also useful and beneficial to see how the created world works and to seek in it the signs of God and to gather together proofs which testify that this world does not exist by accident, nor was it willed by accident but that God is an eternal mind, the Creator of all things. Thus all nature is established to show forth God. And if the minds of men had retained their first light, this knowledge concerning God would have been much clearer. But now many doubts are raised. However, it is useful for reverent minds to cling to these proofs which show that there is a God; just as Paul leads us to look at the creation of the world in Rom. 1[:20]. And in Acts [17:27] Paul says that God is so near that He can almost be touched by our hands. Thus I shall mention briefly just a few proofs, for thinking about them is useful for confirming correct ideas in our minds.

First, let us look at the order of nature itself, that is, at those results which point out the Creator. It is impossible that the permanent order in nature came into being by chance and remains by mere accident, or that it only arose out of raw matter. But the categories in nature were placed in a particular order, and just as a human being comes from a human being, and cattle are born of cattle, so also there remains a changeless order for the movement of heavenly bodies, the fertility of the earth, the constant flow of the rivers, and the knowledge of nature in the minds of men. Thus nature does not exist by accident but it has come forth from some mind which understands order.

Second, there is proof in the nature of the human mind. An intelligent nature is not derived from a brutish thing. But the minds of men do have some cause, because man certainly does not have it in himself, but the mind of man has its origin from somewhere else. Therefore there must be some intelligent nature as the cause

of the human mind. Thus there must be a God.

Third, we have proof from the difference between the noble and the base, and from other signs, orders, and numbers in nature. It is impossible to believe that the distinction between the honorable and the shameful aspects in the human mind exist only by accident or have a purely material origin, or that the indication of order and numbers are only fortuitous. Thus there must be some mind of a grand architect. And these two points are the clearest of all. Moreover, it is worth consideration to remember that the human mind and this light which is planted in the mind are a special testimony concerning God in nature. And among these signs in nature there is also the sign that there is a God, as Paul says [in Rom. 1:19–20], "God revealed Himself to them," that is, God placed into the mind of man the knowledge that there is a God and also placed there the ability to draw conclusions from the effects of His actions.

Fourth, the signs in nature are true. There is a God, as all by nature confess. Therefore this knowledge of Him is correct. This insufficient knowledge would be clearer if our nature had not been corrupted, and it must be strengthened by the other arguments we have mentioned.

Fifth, in Xenophon proof is given by the terrors of man's conscience. It is evident that murderers and others who have committed great crimes suffer horrible torments of the mind, even if no human judgments threaten them. Therefore there is some Mind which has placed this judgment in our hearts which approves good deeds and disapproves evil ones.

Sixth, it is proved by the order of society. The political order of society is not some mere fortuitous coming together of people, but the multitude gathers together with a definite order and an orderly legal system. Nor can this order be sustained only by human effort, but experience shows that those who violate this order, such as those who commit murder, incest, and tyranny, are delivered over to punishment by some divine force. Therefore there is some eternal Mind which gives to men an understanding of order, so that they strive to develop a political society. Likewise they then preserve and defend it with their resources.

Seventh, there is the sophisticated proof derived from a series of efficient causes. There is no progression into infinity in the case of efficient causes. Thus it is necessary to remain in the one first cause. Scientists explain this thought with great brilliance. For if there were a progression into infinity, there would be no order of causes and thus no causes would of necessity connect together.

Eighth, the proof from the final causes or purposes. All things in nature are established for certain uses. It is impossible that this division of purposes either exists by accident or remains by accident, but of necessity it must have come into being by the plan of an Architect.

Ninth, it is proved by things which show the meaning of future events. Future events can be demonstrated with certainty, not only the omens which the pagans study, which have varying kinds of causes, but much more the gift of prophecy which is used in the church by people such as Balaam, Elijah, Jeremiah, or Daniel, who predicted changes and successions in the reigns of kings. Thus there must be some Mind which sees ahead to these changes and shows them beforehand.

These arguments not only bear witness that there is a God, but they are also indications of the providence with which God looks upon men, punishes wicked crimes, and blesses some people so that the fertility of the earth demonstrates that God is concerned with the life of men. The punishment of crimes shows that God demands that we seek righteousness as does the preaching concerning His commands. Likewise, the fact that great men are sent to establish government and human industry shows that God is concerned about our life together as human beings here on earth. These are important points which always influence the minds of good people.

Many other proofs could certainly be suggested, but because they are less clear, I will stop at this point. The knowledge of the Law, by which God wills to be worshiped, has not been ingrafted into man in vain. But it would have been implanted in vain if there had not also been given the ability to judge between good and evil. But these points must be explained later on. We must return to the first warning, namely, we must zealously with minds and eyes keep our attention on those particular passages in which God has revealed Himself to His church, as in His leading the people of Israel from Egypt, in the raising of the dead, and other miracles which were done through the prophets, Christ Himself, and the apostles. And then we must add the Word which has been handed down through them and determine that this is truly the will of God, which is set forth in this Word, and we must distinguish philosophy or natural knowledge from the Gospel, that is, from the promise of the free forgiveness of sins which is given for the sake of the Son of God, as is said under the locus of the difference between the Law and the Gospel.

Locus 3
The Cause of Sin and Concerning Contingency

Wise men have always marveled at the fact that although there is a high degree of order in nature in many respects, yet in the human race there is great confusion brought about by crime, calamity, disease, and death. The philosophers put the causes for this partly in matter and partly in the human will, and a part they lay at the door of fate, which they said was a necessary connection between the first cause and all secondary causes related both to material things and to the will. The Manichaeans, who arose out of a corrupt philosophy, stirred up horrible conflicts, shameful to God and damaging to morals, pertaining to such things as necessity and two gods, one good and one evil. The church of antiquity was shattered concerning the question of contingency and the cause of evil. It is the duty of pious minds to think and speak reverently about God, to retain statements which are true, godly, honorable and which have been approved by the earnest judgments of godly men in the church and which are also useful to morals. But they do this not out of mere curiosity or love of argumentation, which only leads to unending labyrinths of debate.

We must cling to this true and godly teaching with both hands and more importantly with our whole heart, that God is not the cause of sin nor does He will sin, nor drive our wills into sin or the approval of sin. But He is truly and frightfully angry with sin, as He declares so often in His Word with examples of severe punishments, with threats of eternal wrath, and with calamities that befall the world. Indeed, the Son of God showed His anger against sin to the greatest possible extent when He came to be made the sacrifice for sin, demonstrated that the devil is the author of sin, and by His death satisfied the enormous wrath of God.

Thus God is not the cause of sin, nor is sin something which was created or ordained by God; but it is a terrible destruction of both the divine order and the divine work.

These are the causes of sin: the will of the devil and the will of man which turn themselves freely and of their own accord away from God, although He neither wills nor approves this turning away; and they cling in their disorderly wandering to behavior which is against the command of God, as the will of Eve turned itself away from the voice of God and, wandering outside of His order, clung to the fruit.

Although crafty men have gathered together many inextricable arguments relating to this matter, yet we should lay aside all the tricks of argumentation and embrace and hold fast to the true teaching, which I have enunciated with my whole heart, and cling to the testimonies which have been divinely handed down concerning this matter, even if we cannot reply to all the subtlties raised in opposition. The testimonies are these:

1. Gen. 1:31, "God saw all which He had made and it was very good," that is, pleasing to God, laid out in an orderly manner and completely in keeping with the divine mind, and established for definite future uses for mankind. Ps. 5:4, "You are not a God who takes pleasure in iniquity," that is, [You are] a God who truly and without pretense hates sin. John 8:44, "When the devil speaks a lie, he speaks of his own, for he is a liar and the father of lying," that is, the primary source and cause of lying. Furthermore, Christ distinguishes between the lie and the liar, as if He were saying, "To be sure the devil has received his substance [or being] from outside himself, for all the angels were created by God, of whom some later fell." But the devil has something uniquely his own, which he did not receive from God, namely, his lying, that is, his sin which the devil's own free will spawned. As we shall explain later on at greater length, the substances of the devil and of man were created and sustained by God and yet the will of the devil and the will of man are the causes of sins. For the will could abuse its own liberty and turn itself from God.

2. Zech. 8:17, " 'Let none of you imagine evil in your hearts and love no false oath. For all these are things which I hate,' says the Lord." Thus, since this hatred of sin in the divine will is absolutely real, we must never think that God wills sin.

3. 1 John 2:16, "The concupiscence of the flesh is not of the Father, but of the world." 1 John 3:8, "He who commits sin is of the devil, for the devil sins from the beginning," that is, the primary author of sin is the devil. Rom. 5:12, "Through man sin entered into the world," that is, sin is not a thing established by God, but man with his own liberty turned himself away from God and discarded the gifts of God and left destruction as the inheritance for his posterity.

The figures of speech in the Hebrew language do not conflict with the statements I have just cited, for example, "I will harden the heart of Pharaoh," Ex. 7:3. For it is certain that in the Hebrew expression He is referring to the promise of these things, not to His effectual will, as in the expression, "Lead us not into temptation," which means, do not allow us to be led astray, do not allow us to fall or to rush into temptation.

Furthermore, earnest people must be warned concerning what sin really is, so that they can distinguish a thing established by God from sin, which is a

disturbance or confusion of the divine order. Therefore it is correct to say that sin is a defect or a lack, as the dialectitians say.

It is easy to define original sin. It is darkness in the mind, that is, the human mind does not have an enlightened understanding and a firm commitment to divine providence, divine admonitions and promises. And in the will there is a turning away, that is, the will is without a fear, love, or trust in God. The heart is without the obedience which is in harmony with the law of nature, but it is carried beyond God's order and contrary to God by its wandering and erring inclinations. It is well known that these evils constitute a lack or a defect and are not something established by God. They are a horrible perversion of human nature. Therefore, God is not the cause of sin in His propagation and preservation of the substance of human nature, even though He does aid and preserve this mass of humanity such as it now exists, in the way that a potter makes a cup not out of gold but out of lead, and even though He is truly and horribly angry at this perversion. But He sent His Son to assuage this wrath and to heal the wound in our nature. Thus it can be understood that God is not the cause of the vices with which we are born, nor does He will or approve this evil.

At this point let us be done with the argument that since a defect or lack is nothing, that is, it is not a positive thing, why is God angry at nothing? The truth is that there is a great difference between nothing in the sense of a deprivation and nothing in the sense of the negative. For "nothing" understood in the sense of deprivation requires a subject, and there is in that subject (man in this case) a certain corruption on account of which the subject has been rejected, as when the ruins of a building are a corruption as they stand in a heap of broken rubble. Thus original sin is the corruption and disorder of certain elements of man. God hates this and because of this corruption He is angry with the subject. In the case of a disease "nothing" indicates a deprivation because man as the subject remains and in that subject there is some kind of disorder. But the horse of Alexander now is a "nothing" in the negative sense [because it no longer exists].

This brief explanation will suffice, for it is true and when considered properly brings some light to the student. We are not seeking more detailed disputations and interminable labyrinths. Mathematical matters can be subjected to embellishments beautiful to the eyes, but these matters of which we are speaking cannot be handled this way. However, with attentive consideration they can little by little be better understood. A wounded man hurts when he looks at his wound. He knows that his wound is not merely something negative, but that the members of his body have been torn apart. Thus Paul groans when he sees the crimes and iniquities of Nero, which he knows are not a mere "nothing" in the negative sense but the hideous ruins of a divine work. When considering this matter we learn that something is evil or a defect or a lack and we are acknowledging that sin is not to be minimized. Just as the order in the work of God, namely in man, is a thing established by God and pleasing to Him and of service to man, so that for this reason it is called very good; so, on the contrary, these ruins are an overturning of the order, which has not been ordained by God. Rather it has been accomplished by the devil and the will of man, and thus has been rejected by God and is destructive to the devil and to man. Thus these ruins or this destruction or these disorders are called "evil," that is, out of harmony with the divine mind, displeasing to God, and fatal to the devil and to man.

This explanation will shed some light on the following discussion of actual sin, concerning which there are many intricate questions. At this point it is easy to understand the idea of a defect if a person will look not only at the actions but also at the mind which directs the actions. It is all perfectly clear that it is a defect or lack when Eve, in eating the fruit, was not governed by the light of God, and that her will was turned away from God. Although in the meantime external and internal forces came into play which are positive things, and although there are erring forces—indeed a disordering of the regular order, as when a ship is tossed about because of lack of sails and oars by the winds and the tempests—yet this imagery describes these defects. Moreover, as long as the ship remains a ship some motions remain, even so as long as man remains man certain activities remain, albeit they are erring and confused. Thus God is not the cause of sin. For although He does sustain human nature to an extent, yet the defects in the human mind are not produced by Him, and Eve's free will was properly and truly the cause for her action and she voluntarily turned herself away from God.

When this statement has been established, that God is not the cause of sin and that He does not will sin, it follows that sin occurs by contingency, that is, that not all things which happen take place by necessity. For since sin has arisen out of the will of the devil and of man and does not take place by the will of God, [human] wills were so constituted that they were able not to sin. Furthermore the cause of the contingency of our actions is the freedom of our will. At this point we are speaking of the contingency of human actions, not of the forces of other things, of which we shall speak under physical matters.

In the second place, this also must be granted, that apostolic Scripture attributes to man, even now after the Fall, a certain liberty of choosing those things which are subject to reason and of performing the external works commanded by the law of God. Thus the righteousness of the Law is called the righteousness of the flesh, Rom. 10:3–5, because to some extent external obedience can be accomplished by the powers of this nature, as Paul says, and the Law was laid down for the unrighteous, that is, to coerce the unregenerate

and to punish the stubborn, 1 Tim. 1:9. Likewise, "The Law was our schoolmaster unto Christ," Gal. 3:24. Unless this liberty is in some way left in our nature, there is no value in the law and governments and the entire civil rule. Thus there does remain some freedom which, as I have said, is the source of contingency.

But because God says that there are limits to contingency, we must hold to the distinction. On the one hand, God sets limits to the things which He wills, and on the other hand, to the things which He does not will. Further, He limits the things which depend wholly on His will and the things which He Himself does in part and which the will of man does in part.

God foresees the crimes of Saul, but He does not will them or force the will of Saul, but He allows the will of Saul to proceed in this way and does not force him to go further. Meanwhile, however, He sees where Saul will be restrained. Thus His prevision does not take away necessity, nor does it change in the will of man the method of action which still remains in human nature, that is, the liberty which still remains.

Nor does the fact that God sustains human nature stand in the way of contingency or liberty. For even at the time that the will of Eve was the cause of her action, because in the creation freedom was a gift bestowed upon the human race, divine sustenance did not form an impediment to this gift. Thus, however great the freedom is, it is not hindered by the sustaining of God, but just as God sustains Saul, whatever he is, likewise the will of Saul is properly the cause of his evil action.

At this point certain objections are raised, such as Jer. 10:23, "I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man's power to direct his own steps." And even though below in the book entitled "The Free Will" these words have to be explained, yet at this point also the reader must be warned briefly. It is one thing to speak of the choice of the will and another concerning the outcome or success of an act of the will. Pompey wanted to wage war on Caesar and he freely willed to do so, but many other causes governed the outcome and not only the will of Pompey. Thus the statement of Jeremiah is instructive and comforting. The "way of man," that is, both his inward direction and the public demands made upon him or his calling, cannot be sustained only by the powers of man. The human mind cannot foresee all dangers or prepare against them. It often imagines things, as when Josiah erred in waging war against the Egyptians. All wise men have made errors, as Cicero exclaims, "O that I had never been wise." Many accidents happen which produce difficulties and complications for the counsels of men. One mistake often brings enormous ruin, as in the case of David's adultery. Second, the outcome sometimes does not match the good counsel and the good intent. Great calamities can suddenly arise which cast down the mighty from their seats, as is truly said: "All human affairs are tenuous and hang by a thread; and by swift and sudden accident things which men value fall into ruins."

It is concerning these great difficulties, concerning our human weakness and the unpredictability of human affairs which have many mysterious causes, that Jeremiah speaks his warning, and at the same time teaches us to flee to God and seek from Him and expect from Him both guidance and help.

Therefore we must at this point cling to these promises: "It is not you who speak but the Spirit of your heavenly Father who is in you," Matt. 10:20. Likewise, John 14:18; Phil. 2:13; Luke 11:13; Ps. 37:23. We rely on His promises; we seek and await help from God and we know nothing salutary can be done if God does not help us. As Christ says, "Without Me you can do nothing," John 15:5. And the Baptist says, "A man can receive nothing of himself unless it be given him from heaven," John 3:27.

Pompey, Brutus, Antony, and many others made great efforts, but God advanced other people. Therefore, although these points are stated by way of warning concerning the help of God in good and salutary actions, yet we must not conclude from this that there is absolutely no freedom of choice for the human will. Much less does it follow that all good and evil things of necessity come from God. Thus the statement of Jeremiah must be understood correctly, namely, that salutary actions cannot be brought about only by human wisdom and powers.

Let us learn that it is a great and immeasurable gift of God that we are helped to be the saving instruments of God in the whole administration of things, and that we are not deserted even though we were a plague to the human race, as Pharaoh, Nero, Manichaeus, and other men like them have been. We should daily heed this statement of Christ: "Without Me you can do nothing," John 15:5, so that we ardently pray to be directed by God. Furthermore, it is clear that it does not follow from this that God is the effective cause of sin. Indeed, the church of God, since it knows the true God, seriously abhors and hates the sins of Nero and will never say that such actions of necessity occurred or happened by the will of God.

Some people raise in objection the statements in Eph. 1:4–5, "Elect according to the plan of Him who made all things according to the good pleasure of His will," and in 1 Cor. 12:6, "It is the same God who works all things in all." It is certain that these statements in their context are speaking only of the church and the salutary actions which God causes and directs in His church. They are not speaking of His universal sustaining of things or of the individual actions of all animate beings. Therefore these statements must be carefully understood so that they are not transferred from their normal sense to some strange meaning.

Paul warns that the church is not preserved or ruled by human counsels or powers, but by the marvelous works of God. The preservation of Noah in the

flood, the protection of the people in Egypt and in the desert, the things done by Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, and other godly men were and are the works of God accomplished in them to aid the church and spread the true doctrine.

Thus these statements are comforting to us because they testify that God is present with the members of the church and He supports them in their dangers and hardships. God aided David in his battles; He helped the dying Lawrence to make a strong confession when he was torn by fear. Likewise we ourselves are strengthened by these words and promises and pray that we may be directed, as the prophet often cries, "Direct me in Your truth and teach me . . . ," Ps. 25:5. You do all things salutary in Your church, You are in me also as in a member of Your church, You are strong. Make me an instrument of Your salvation and a vessel of Your mercy. . . . An explanation of these statements sheds much light on many other similar statements. But finally to be correct we must add that necessity is of two kinds. On the one hand we call it an absolute necessity when something or some proposition is necessary in a fundamental sense and to oppose it is absolutely impossible and means the destruction of everything. For example, these statements are matters of absolute necessity: God is; God is an essence, intelligent, eternal, of immeasurable wisdom, power, righteousness, goodness, willing what is righteous, pure, but not willing conflict with His own intention, nor willing unrighteousness, cruelty, incest, lusts, etc.

But there is another kind of necessity, the necessity of consequence, which refers to those things or propositions which can be constituted by their own nature in another way, but become necessary either on account of preceding causes or because they have been determined. And there are great differences among these. On the one hand, God determines the good things which He wills, many of which He expresses, as that the dead shall be raised on a certain day, that is, this is necessary and happens out of the necessity of consequence. On the other hand, He sets limits to the evils which He does not will, that is, He sets boundaries and does not allow evils to go beyond them. Thus it was necessary that Pharaoh persecute the Israelites, but this was not necessary of its own nature, but is actually contingent. It is not impossible that the opposite might occur, but because a matter turns out in a certain way, it is said to be necessary or a necessity of consequence. This simple distinction is useful and often taught in the schools, so that we might consider which events actually depend upon and arise from the will of God and which come from some other source.

At this point we ought to say something about necessity in a physical sense, such as that fire of necessity warms or the sun of necessity moves. But the teaching of the church also says that this physical necessity is a necessity of consequence. Thus the sun moves because God has established this order and can change it, as the stories of Joshua and Hezekiah show. This point will be treated more thoroughly later on.

I have dealt with the primary material which is usually discussed on this question, and when these points have been carefully considered, those who are astute can correctly judge concerning this entire controversy and can clearly enough understand that the opinions of the Stoics must never be brought into the church. For how can the man pray to God when he holds that all things happen by necessity? Second, this idea is harmful to good morals as is stated in the tragedies, "The guilt lies with fate, and let no one interfere with fate." For example, the servant of Zeno used to say that he was unjustly punished because fate forced him to do wrong. We must flee such talk and ideas. Plato speaks more correctly as we read in the second book of his *Politeia,* "We must oppose anyone in a city which we wish to be well ruled, who says or hears (whether an old man or a youth, whether in poetry or some other form of writing) that God is the cause of any kind of evil." To say such a thing is of no value to a city and no amount of explanation changes that fact.

I will add an explanation of the commonly used argument, as it seems to me, which is useful for godly minds. For the objection is raised that a secondary cause does not act without a primary cause. Thus the secondary cause, such as the will of Eve, is properly the cause of sin, and therefore the first cause is also the cause of sin. I realize that ingenious minds are sometimes disturbed by this objection, and as a result of this disturbance fall into absurd notions. Although the way to get around this point is tenuous and slippery, yet I shall deal with another reply which is weightier and more substantive, which is derived from the fundamental principle that God is present with His creatures, not in the sense of a Stoic god who is bound to secondary causes, so that He can move only in a simple way, as secondary causes move, but rather God is a completely free agent who sustains nature and by His own counsel acts in various different ways toward different things.

As in the case of physical things, although He sustains the natural order, yet He sometimes, contrary to this normal order, commands the sun to go backward, holds back the rain for three years and then suddenly sends a great flood, and makes an old woman fertile. Likewise we daily should know of the many things in our physical lives which take place counter to the power of secondary causes, and yet God sustains them. Many people are freed from various dangers at the hands of disease, in battle, at sea—where secondary causes have left them without hope. Therefore in order that prayer can truly take place, let us keep in mind that God is present in such a way, performing His work, not as the Stoics imagine, bound to secondary causes, but sustaining nature and governing many things by His completely free will. God acts in this way,

with His will, sustaining and aiding the person who acts in keeping with His order, but not aiding one who goes contrary to His order, even while He sustains His order. In this way He established the will of Eve, so that it was a free agent which could observe or disregard God's order. The solution, though complicated, should be this: A secondary cause does not act without a first, namely, without something to sustain it. This is universally true, but not always helpful. For the first cause does not support a result which He does not will. Thus the will of Eve in turning herself away from God is a personal and independent cause of her action.

The Stoics and the Christians do not understand in the same way the proposition that a secondary cause does not act without a primary. For the Stoics believe that there is a similar connection in all things, whether good or bad, just as there is an essential connection between the husband and the wife in procreation. But for the Christians it is necessary to distinguish between the good and the bad. The secondary cause does not act without the primary, which acts in a sustining role; but the first cause does many things apart from the secondary, because it is a free agent. And the secondary cause is free, just as the will of Eve was free to do evil, without the aid of the first cause. For liberty has this quality. This is a clear and none too complicated explanation.

Others say this: The secondary cause does not act without the first cause which produces something positive, while the secondary, like the will of Eve, does do things which are deficient. At this point they reply that the secondary cause does not act positively but aberrantly and deficiently. This solution, if thus explained, will be clearer (and the meaning of the obscure solution is consistent with it), namely, that the relationship of the primary and secondary causes is to be considered to be as God, a free agent, wills it to be and not compared with the union of a husband and wife.

These arguments are difficult, and therefore in thinking about God we should direct our mind and eyes to the revelation of God, so that we can recognize Him in the way that He has revealed Himself and thus conclude that God is freely present and bringing aid to those who call upon Him, as He has promised, "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him," Is. 55:6.

These statements regarding individual action and help must be burned into our soul. For this abstruse argument regarding the general sustaining by God cannot be looked into with real penetration, just as God's act of creation cannot be fully understood. In summary, let us cling to this proposition: God is present with His work, not as a Stoic god but as a truly free agent who sustains His creation and governs many things.

Locus 4
Human Powers or Free Choice

Valla and many others have taken the freedom away from the will of man. Therefore all things happen with God's decree. This notion has arisen out of the disputes with the Stoics and brings them to the point of abolishing the idea of contingency of good and evil actions, indeed of all activities in even beasts and the elements. I have already said that we must not import Stoic ideas into the church or uphold the fatalistic necessity of all things; but rather we must concede that there is some place for contingency. It was not necessary that Alexander kill Clitus.

Furthermore, we must not confuse the argument concerning divine determination with the question of free choice. For when we ask about the will of man and other human powers, the discussion revolves around only the matter of human weakness and not around all the powers in his complete nature. We should consider ourselves, the darkness of our mind, and the weakness of our will and heart. The church sets forth this doctrine of our infirmity not to plant Stoic ideas, nor to tie up our minds with perplexing and insoluable arguments, but to show us the benefits of the Son of God who was sent to destroy the works of the devil, who has inflicted tragic wounds upon human nature.

The less educated should be cautioned that the terminology has been taken from the physical world and refers to aspects of man. They should compare these terms with the language of the apostles and prophets.

Man has the ability of knowing and judging, which is called the mind (*mens*). The intellect or the reason also is a part of this knowing process. A second part of man is the seeking part, called the will (*voluntas*), which either obeys or resists the judgment. Under the will there are the desires of the senses or the affections, the subject and source of which is the heart. These desires sometimes agree with and sometimes contend against the will. Under the will is also the locomotive part of man. We will give a fuller explanation of these things when we describe the physical universe.

Furthermore, it is called free choice (*arbitrium*) when the mind and the will are joined together. Or free choice is the name given to the faculty or power of the will to choose and seek those things which have been shown to it, or to reject them. This faculty or ability in our nature in its perfect state was far greater, but now it has been hindered in many different ways, as we shall discuss later on. But now I want to explain the meaning of the term as it is most commonly used. It was by his free choice that Fabricius did not will to accept the gold offered by Pyrrhus or that Antigonus was unwilling to gaze upon the head of the murdered Pyrrhus when it was brought to him. Further, in the literature of the prophets and apostles the words "mind" and "heart" are both used in place of "intellect" or "will," in the true sense of the word, not in the sense of willing something only in a pretense, that is, included under the will is a person's judgment and his true desires, not pretended ones, and not only some external work. There are also records of long arguments on the term "free choice" which can easily be evaluated by those who are interested. Bypassing these considerations we shall turn our attention to the subject itself.

For when there is doubt whether the human will is free, or when the question is asked in the church whether and to what extent the human will can obey the law of God, we cannot judge regarding this question, unless we consider the greatness of our sin with which we are born or our natural weaknesses, also unless we know that we are commanded by the law of God to perform not only external civil actions but also the perpetual and perfect obedience of our entire human nature, in keeping with the command, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart . . . " For if the nature of man had not been corrupted by sin, he would have a clearer and firmer knowledge of God, he would not have doubt concerning the will of God, he would have a true fear, true trust, and finally he would show obedience to the entire law, that is, in the nature of man the light would shine more brightly concerning God and all actions would be in keeping with the law of God. But now the nature of man is under the oppression of the disease of our origin, it is filled with doubts about God, it does not truly fear Him, nor truly trust in Him, nor burn with love for Him, and many are the flames of vile affections. Therefore, since it is manifest that the nature of man can never satisfy the law of God, we ask the question, What and how much can the will of man do?

My first reply is: Since there remains in the nature of man a certain judgment and desire for things which are opposed to his reason and senses, there also remains a desire for external civil works. Thus the human will can by its own powers and without regeneration perform to some degree the external works of the Law. This is the freedom of the will which the philosophers correctly attribute to man. For Paul also—in distinguishing the righteousness of the flesh from spiritual righteousness—confesses that unregenerate men do have a certain love and do perform certain external works of the law, to restrain the hand from murder, from theft, and from violence. He calls this the righteousness of the flesh.

Indeed, God has commanded this discipline also of the unregenerate, and He punishes their violation of it in this life with the most awful punishments, as the afflictions of murderers and incestuous men clearly

show. Thus 1 Tim. 1:9 says, "The Law was given or laid down for the unrighteous," that is, to compel the unregenerate and to punish the stubborn. Likewise, "The Law is a schoolmaster," Gal. 3:24, that is, the one which coerces and teaches, and the words are added "to lead us to Christ." Public discipline is held in honor by a verse of this kind. For, although discipline does not merit the forgiveness of sins and is not the righteousness by which we are declared righteous before God, yet it is a necessary thing, so that we can in the meantime be taught regarding Christ. Nor is the Holy Spirit efficacious in the stubborn, who persevere in their lusts contrary to their conscience. However, we shall discuss later why this discipline is necessary. At this point we only want to demonstrate from the passages which speak of the righteousness of the flesh, that there is some choice, that is, some freedom in the unregenerate toward fulfilling the external works of the law.

Yet we must be aware that this freedom is greatly hindered by two causes: the weakness with which we are born and the devil. And because the wicked lusts in men are sharp stimuli and great inducements to our minds, men often obey these lusts contrary to the judgment of their minds, even when they could hold themselves back if they exerted some self-control, as Medea says: "I see better things and I approve them, but I follow the baser things." And Paul says in Eph. 2:2 ff. that the devil works in the ungodly. Here also, he impedes the guidance of discipline in many ways through our whole life, and he drives many to rush blind and raging into the most tragic evils. This is what is written about Saul and Judas in the clearest language, "Satan entered into him," cf. 1 Sam. 16:14; John 13:27. And there is great madness in the worship of idols and the savagery of tyrants and civil wars, as when Xanthius and many others set fire to their own cities and threw themselves and their wives and small children into the fire—manifest works of the devil. There is a great weakness in the human race, as the history of all times and our daily experience show us, in which so great an amount of wretched miseries is perceived that all the wise men of the gentiles are utterly amazed as to where this enormity of confusion, sadness, and catastrophes comes from in this present nature. But yet among these detriments there remains some happiness, some freedom in ruling our external activities for some degree of improvement.

Second, in the church of God we speak not only of outward behavior but also of the complete implementation of the Law in the heart. The mind of the unregenerate is filled with doubts about God, their hearts are without true fear of God, without true trust, and they have enormous desires to act against the law of God. Finally, human nature is oppressed by sin and death, and the magnitude of this evil cannot be grasped by human judgment, but is only revealed in the Word of God. In this Word it is certain that men do not have the freedom of overcoming this depravity which is born within us, or of overcoming death. This great and extraordinary wickedness of the human race is observed when the freedom of the will is diminished. For the will cannot cast out the depravity which is born in us, nor can it satisfy the law of God, because the law of God not only warns about the final punishment and the imperfections of our works, but it also demands the total obedience of the heart, as when the Law says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength . . . ," Deut. 6:5.

The Law judges and condemns sin in the nature of man, but it does not take it away. And just as we cannot overcome death, so we cannot cast out the depravity born in us by which we are in conflict with the law of God. These evils must be acknowledged, so that we can see that the benefits of Christ, who takes away sin and death and restores human nature, come from the opposite direction. He speaks thus of those great evils which the human will cannot take away. Thus this will is captive and not free to remove death and the depravity of human nature.

Third, the question is raised regarding spiritual actions. For from the beginning of the world there have always been and still are living members of the church who are governed not only by human powers or human concern, but in whom the Holy Spirit has kindled spiritual emotions, the knowledge of God, the fear of God, faith, love, and other virtues, which exist in some to a great degree and in others to a lesser degree. The philosophers ridicule these ideas, and so do the Pelagians, yet it is absolutely true that the Holy Spirit is poured into the hearts of believers. As it says in Zech. 12:10, "I will pour out upon the house of David . . . the Spirit of grace and of supplication." We should know that the fullest comfort is offered to us; in our great weakness we should always remember this.

The blessing of God is immeasurable and indescribable because it promises to us the help of the Holy Spirit. As Christ says, Luke 11:13, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give His Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" If we were not helped by the Holy Spirit, even sadder moral lapses and worse confusions would befall us as has happened and still happens to the gentiles and the Anabaptists in their ravings. Further, we must hold to this statement as true: The human will without the Holy Spirit cannot produce the spiritual desires which God demands, namely, a true fear of God, a true confidence in the mercy of God, true love for God, patience and courage in afflictions and at the approach of death, in the way that Stephen, Lawrence, Agnes, and countless others faced death with great strength of character.

We must gather appropriate passages in order to refute the Pelagians and to encourage ourselves to seek the aid of the Holy Spirit, also in order that we may instruct those who are not ruled by the Holy Spirit that they are not living members of the church.

Rom. 8:14, "Those who are led by the Spirit of

God are the sons of God." Again, v. 9, "If a person does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him."

These two statements are sufficiently clear and testify plainly that the heirs of eternal life are given the Holy Spirit and also are guided by Him. And it is certain that the term "Spirit of God" in these passages does not refer to human reason but to the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ and who has been sent into the hearts of the faithful and has kindled the knowledge of God through the Gospel and aroused actions which are in keeping with the law of God.

1 Cor. 2:14, "The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God." The term "natural man" (*psychichos*) refers to a man living a natural life, that is, by his natural reason and senses alone, without the Holy Spirit. For in this passage Paul is distinguishing between natural man and the spiritual man. For although a certain knowledge of the divine law has been written into man by nature, yet great doubts have developed concerning God's providence, and even more serious doubts concerning the Gospel, as to whether we are accepted or our prayers are heard. From this darkness each heart considers whether it is indeed true that God is angry with sin, or whether it truly has been determined that a person shall be received, heard, and helped in his afflictions. In considering such things our souls become secure and complacent, or they run a way from God and the person does not understand Paul's statement, "The natural man does not receive the things which are of the Spirit of God" really to mean that God is angry against sin, and he does not feel this anger or truly fear God; just as David, when he committed his adultery did no yet sense the wrath of God, but later on he felt it when he was again moved by the Holy Spirit. Likewise, Saul fled from God, did not call upon Him, did not believe that he needed His aid, and did not trust in Him. Cf. John 3:5; 6:44; 15:5.

Is. 59:20–21, "A redeemer will come to Zion, to those who return from transgressions in Jacob. . . . This is My covenant with them, says the Lord: 'My Spirit who is upon you and My words which I have put into your mouth shall not depart from your mouth nor from the mouth of your offspring forever. . . . ' " These wonderfully sweet words contain a description of the church and teach what the church is and where it is and what the real benefits of God are toward His church. That gathering which proclaims the Gospel that has been handed down by the prophets and apostles is the church, and here are the living members of the church, who possess the Holy Spirit and have these special benefits, namely, the Word of God, the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit, and life eternal.

Moreover, we must know that the Holy Spirit is efficacious through the voice of the Gospel as it is heard and meditated on as Gal. 3:2 ff. says. Thus we receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. And it is often said that when we think about God it is necessary to be directed by the Word of God and not seek God without His Word. And when we are guided by His Word, we meet the three causes of good works, namely, the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, and the human will which assents to and does not contend against the Word of God. For the will could disregard the Word of God, as Saul did of his own free will. But when the mind, hearing and sustaining itself, does not resist or indulge in hesitation, but with the aid of the Holy Spirit tries to assent, in this contest the will is not idle.

The ancients said that good works arose out of preceding grace and an assenting will. Thus Basil says, "Only want to, and God has preceded you." God has previously turned us, calls, warns, and helps us; but we should see to it that we do not resist Him. For it is manifest that sin arises out of us and not by the will of God. Chrysostom says, "He who draws, draws the willing." It is also said in the passage in John 6:45, "Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me." He commands us to learn, that is, to hear the Word, not to resist it,, to assent to the Word of God, not to dissent. These points are clear if we in true sorrow and true prayer have learned what the nature of the struggle of the will is and, if it could remain firm, there would be absolutely no struggle, no conflict no anguish in the saints. But since the struggle is great and difficult, the will is not idle but assents weakly. Unless it is encouraged to pray by these promises and examples and unless it is aided by the Holy Spirit, it would rush to destruction.

I have seen many non-Epicureans who, when they were in pain over their lapses into sin, argued: "How can I hope to be received into grace, since I do not feel that new light or new virtues have been transfused into me? Besides, if free choice has nothing to do until I feel that this new birth of which you are speaking has taken place, I will continue in my rebellion and other wicked activities." This Manichaean idea is a horrible lie, and our minds must be rescued from this error and taught that free choice does do something. Pharaoh and Saul were not forced but willingly and freely resisted God, as we must argue each time there is need for a clear testimony of His presence.

Nor must we permit the Manichaean ravings which argue that there is a certain number of men, whom they call materially minded and earthly, who cannot be converted. Nor does the conversion of David take place in the way that a stone might be turned into a fig. But the free choice did something in David. When he heard the rebuke and the promise, he willingly and freely made his confession. And his will did something, when he comforted himself with [Nathan's] statement, "The Lord has taken away your sin," 2 Sam. 12:13. And when he tried to comfort himself, he was helped by the Holy Spirit in accord with the statement of Paul, "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation," Rom. 1:16, to him who does not resist, that is, who does not

despise the promise but assents to it and believes it. Likewise 2 Cor. 3:8; Gal. 3:14.

If this infusion of qualities were to be expected without any action on our part, as the enthusiasts and the Manichaeans imagine, there would be no need for the ministry of the Gospel, there would be no struggle in our souls. But God has instituted the ministry in order that His voice might be received, in order that our mind might think about the promise and cling to it and that we might contend against our rebelliousness, and that the Holy Spirit at the same time might be efficacious in us.

Therefore to those who excuse their ceasing from trying [to fight against rebelliousness] on the grounds that they think that free choice can do nothing, let me make this reply: To be sure, the command of God is eternal and immovable that you should obey the voice of the Gospel, that you should listen to the Son of God, that you should confess Him as your mediator. How shameful these sins are, not to be willing to consider that the Son of God has been given as the Mediator for the human race! I cannot do it, you say. But indeed you can and when you strengthen yourself by the voice of the Gospel, pray that you will be helped by God, and know that the comfort of the Holy Spirit is efficacious. Know that God wills that in this very manner we are to be converted, when we pray and contend against our rebelliousness and other sinful activities. Therefore, some of the ancients put it this way: The free choice in man is the ability to apply oneself toward grace, that is, our free choice hears the promise, tries to assent to it and rejects the sins which are contrary to conscience. Such things do not take place in the devils. Therefore we must consider the difference between the devils and the human race. Further, these points become clearer when the promise is considered. Since the promise is universal and since in God there are not conflicting wills, it is necessary that there is some cause within us for the difference as to why Saul is rejected and David received, that is, there must be a different action on the part of the two men. When these points are rightly understood, they are true and useful in the exercise of faith and in true consolation. Since our souls rest in the Son of God who is shown to us in the promise, this will cast light upon the connection of the causes which are the Word of God, the Holy Spirit and the will of man.

Furthermore, if we are discussing the whole life of believers, even though there is a great weakness, yet there is still some freedom in the will, since it is indeed already being aided by the Holy Spirit and can do something in preventing outward falls into sin. When Joseph resisted the temptations to adultery, these causes came to his rescue, the Word of God and the Holy Spirit who moved his mind, so that the Word warmly encouraged him: the mind convincing him of how great a ruin would follow, if he yielded to the devil, namely, the loss of his gifts, the eternal wrath of God, the punishments in this life and the life to come, besides the many lapses and many offenses. Moved by these thoughts, his will assented and the Holy Spirit strengthened his will in its weakness, quenched the flames of lust in his heart, aroused his fear of God and faith which bowed to God, addressed the dangers, and sought the guidance of God and a happy outcome to the matter. In these matters the will was not idle but was fighting against these temptations and commanding the eyes and the feet that they avoid the occasion of failing. These examples explain the causes of good actions.

Moreover, all of these things have been said in order that the aid of the Holy Spirit may be increased and our diligence made greater, as Christ says, "The heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him," Luke 11:13. He does not say this to those who spurn Him, to the indifferent, to those who fight against Him, to those who shamefully rush from one sin to another. And in another place He says, "To him who has, it shall be given, and from him who has not, shall be taken even that which he has," Matt. 25:29. And Paul commands us to beware that we "do not receive the grace of God in vain," 2 Cor. 6:1.

You should often repeat to your soul the statement of Christ, "The heavenly Father gives His Holy Spirit to those who ask Him," Luke 11:13. We should carefully consider what a great gift He promises and how often He earnestly commands us to ask, cf. Matt. 7:7. It will benefit us to do this. For faith is encouraged to ask, and we need to ask because of our negligence and rebellion. Furthermore, our rebellion is nourished by our neglect of thinking on this precept and this promise of Christ.

Fourth, we must also consider the complaint regarding the objects and results outside of us. For it is one thing to speak of these matters and it is something else to speak concerning the choice of the will in regard to something which it desires. For many things befall a man in the inextricable course of human events which do not arise only from ourselves, as when David is driven into exile because of the crime of his son. Likewise there are many human errors in thinking, as when Josiah thought that he was doing the right thing in waging war upon the Egyptians.

Many warnings concerning these dangers are given in the prophets, as in Jer. 10:23, "I know, O Lord, that a man's way is not in himself, nor is it in a man to direct his own steps." He understands the word "way" to be a man's vocation, of which it is manifest that not all the dangers can be seen and the outcomes and successes are not under our control. Moses is called to lead the people out of Egypt, but he never foresees all those 40 years in the desert and how great a multitude would be wandering there, lacking water and food; and because of the sins of the people and their disloyalty his leadership would be troubled, and he knew that his success was not within his own power but must be directed by God. Therefore, says Jeremiah, "The way or path of a man is not in himself," that is,

his calling cannot be governed only by human counsels or human endeavors, and that the direction will not be a happy one unless God comes to our aid.

John the Baptist speaks the same way: "A man can receive nothing unless it is given him from heaven," John 3:27. Hezekiah is happy in his rule because he is helped by God. Ahab is not happy because he is not aided by God. Mark Antony wished to be the sole ruler, but this was not granted to him by heaven, but it was given to Augustus. Statements such as this do not abolish the freedom of the will, because what has been said before concerning foreknowledge applies here. But when we speak of objective matters outside ourselves, and of events to which many other situations apply besides our own will, as when we say that the will of Pompey alone cannot be the cause of the victory, [it is a different matter].

Therefore, although there is some liberty or freedom of choice, yet we at the same time must consider the impediments, so that we learn to set aside our self-confidence and see our help from God. A great many things happen to a man caught in the inextricable labyrinth of human maneuvering. We can learn of such matters from the prayer of Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. 20:12, "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon You, O Lord," and Christ says, "I will not leave you as orphans," John 14:18, and "I will give the Spirit to you as your Comforter," John 15:26. God is present, and He delivers us from our difficulties and cleans up our mistakes, as Psalm 145:18, 14; likewise, 37:5.

And Paul says, "It is God who works in you that you should will and also do such things as are pleasing to Him," Phil 2:13. This admonition and consolation must always be planted in our hearts. And you as pastor and leader of the church, whether of young people or of families, shall provide certain things and properly administer them with great care; but know that in this very action good things will follow if God aids you, as Ps. 127:1 says. In addition many unforeseen dangers come upon us . . . and you pray that they may be prevented by God. Certain errors will befall you, and from these you pray to be delivered, as in a marvelous way God corrected the erring Jonah. We daily experience these hindrances to our freedom.

But such confusing judgments have been made concerning this question because men for the most part are so foolish and live without discipline, without concern, without any exercise of faith or prayer. How can people like this distinguish among the degrees of actions or the difference in objectives?

It is characteristic of Paul that he does not want to bring in knowingly any aberrations in doctrine through ambition or avarice. To some degree such things are within his power, but that his calling is productive and effective is a gift of God alone. And this is also a gift of God that he was not embroiled in doctrinal deviations either through ignorance or error, or through other vices, and thus he prayed with great earnestness that he be guided and aided by God.

Now I shall speak about the statement in Ecclus. 15:14, "God left man in the hands of his own counsel." This statement is praiseworthy, if it is understood with some degree of common sense. It is a certainty that in the infirmity of our nature there are many hindrances to our freedom. The first is the corruption of our nature itself, because of which the knowledge of God in our minds has become obscured and the will and the mind turn away from God and do not have a strong fear of Him, nor do they burn with trust or love for Him, and they are attacked by many wicked lusts.

The second impediment is the devil, who with frightful hatred of Christ creates opportunities by which he traps men in various snares and sins, and when the flames have been allowed to burn, he increases our hate as he did in the case of Cain, Saul, Judas and others.

The third impediment lies in the confusion of this life, a great mountain of troubles and dangers in which there are given to us many and daily unforeseen and inextricable difficulties which exceed all human understanding, such as when David did not foresee the treason of his son. As the popular saying goes: You do not know what evening will bring.

Therefore, since there are so many hindrances to our freedom in this corruption of our nature, this boastful statement, "God left man in the hands of his own counsel," must not be taken at face value without some interpretation. This praise of freedom is proper when it is applied to our nature in its unimpaired state. Then man was under the control of his own good counsel, that is, his freedom was not encumbered either by the darkness or depravity of his nature or by the devil or by changing circumstances, but his choice and his ability to do right were completely free. But now in the state of weakness his inner desires to follow the law of God are not aroused without the power of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, even his outward behavior is often hindered, as we have indicated above. Thus if a person argues that the statement of Sirach in Ecclus. 15:14 must be understood as applying to our nature in its present state, it will be necessary to add a serious reservation, namely, that God has left man to his own counsel in the sense that he can of himself rush to destruction, and aided by the Holy Spirit he can do right. For even then the will is not idle or static, as Joseph experienced when he struggled with himself; nor is spiritual impetus given to his nature as a matter of course. But his will with the aid of the Holy Spirit is free to a degree, that is, he can worship God and act more properly and consistently.

Finally we must cite two points from Jerome which are often quoted and need some interpretation. The first point is: "Let him be anathema who says that God has commanded the impossible." Whatever may have been the occasion for this statement, it is certain

that those who cite it and proclaim it demonstrate that they are not thinking of the reason why God gave His law. Our civil wisdom tells us that laws are laid down in order to be obeyed. But the law of God was given for this particular reason, that the judgment of God against sin might be manifested. God wills that His wrath be seen, and with the voice of the Law He shows us our sins. It is just and righteous that we love God with our whole heart. Therefore, because we are not just or righteous, the Law judges and accuses us and brings the wrath of God down upon us. The second purpose of the Law is that it might continue its work in those who already confess our Mediator and have been reconciled and aided by God.

And thus when you hear the expression "the Law is impossible," you must not consult your civil wisdom or think about external compliance, for Paul denies that the wrath of God is taken away by the Law, and he insists that in the weakness of our nature the Law cannot be fulfilled.

Likewise Rom. 3:20, "By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified." In this passage he admits that works do take place. This is because he is discussing external works. In this sense the Law is possible to fulfill. But he denies that a man is righteous because of these works, or that the Law is satisfied. For the Law does not remove sin and the wrath of God, or the darkness of our mind, or the fact that we are away from God in our will and in our heart.

Therefore, although men in their civil wisdom are offended when it is said that the Law is impossible to fulfill, yet the statement is true in regard to our corrupt nature, and the church must teach that there is a distinction between the law of God, which judges our inward sins, and human laws, which only speak of outward behavior. The church must also teach this in order that the greatness of the benefits of Christ, who has taken away our sins, might be understood, since the Law does not take them away. Thus He is our Mediator so that for His sake we might be righteous, for by the Law we are not righteous. Therefore He gives us the Holy Spirit, so that even in our great weakness the Law still can begin its work and thus some salutary things can happen to us and to others, and the devil may be hindered in laying his snares for the whole human race.

Now there is also the second statement of Jerome to be considered: "Let him be anathema who says that the Law can be fulfilled without grace." The brevity of this dictum also demands an explanation. For grace is to be understood not only with reference to the aid of the Holy Spirit, but it also includes the concept of the gracious imputation which always takes place for the sake of (*propter*) Christ, as well as the aid of the Holy Spirit. For first of all it is necessary that the knowledge of Christ and faith in Christ illumine our works.

Grace must first be understood in this way. The law of God is also given through grace, that is, because we are received by God for the sake of Christ through faith and are made members of Christ, it is a certainty that we are already pleasing to God, as if we had already completely fulfilled the Law. It is a great blessing that sin is thus buried and we unworthy men are received by God.

Then grace must also be understood in the sense of the help we so greatly need. Our minds must be kindled with the true light and kept in the Word of God. The desires for faith must be aroused in our hearts; our minds must also be moved to receive what is salutary for ourselves and others, as David was moved to destructive action when by his own human counsel he decided to make a numbering or census of the people, 1 Chron. 21:1. Therefore we must always pray that we may do things which are both pleasing to God and beneficial to ourselves and the church. Neither can be done without God's aid and direction. Moreover, it is certain that He wills to be present with us and to bestow His wealth upon us when we pray, as Christ clearly says, Luke 11:13.

If we experience these things in our lives, the teaching can be much more clearly understood. But because only a few seek this help, and even with a kind of desperation flee from God and seek human wisdom, therefore they do not come to the knowledge of the promises and benefits of Christ. Therefore we must overcome this ignorance and rebellion and acknowledge the greatness of our miseries and dangers, and arouse ourselves to calling upon God in truth. For in so doing we will experience that the promises of God are indeed true, as it is said in Matt. 7:7 and again in Ps. 145:18.

In the statement of Jerome we have two blessings. The Law comes through grace, that is, by the imputation of God's righteousness for the sake of Christ and by the aid of the Holy Spirit, for since the obedience is only beginning and we are still far away from the perfection of the Law, yet we are pleasing to God for the sake of Christ. Thus both concepts are included in the statement, "The Law is established through faith," Rom. 3:31, first by imputation because for the sake of Christ we receive reconciliation, without which the Law is only the voice of damnation. And second, because by faith the Holy Spirit is received and obedience begins and pleases God for the sake of Christ.

Locus 5
Sin

Although all nations see the horrible confusion, vices, and grievous calamities of the human race and feel the burden of sin, yet only the church of God teaches both where sin comes from and what it is and hears the Word of God concerning divine wrath and present and eternal punishments. And though human wisdom teaches us how to guide morals [and] disapproves and punishes actions against common reason, yet it does not recognize what is inherent in the consideration of sin, namely guilt before God or the wrath of God. Alexander saw that he had acted shamefully when he killed Clitus and he mourned as a result, because he made a judgment contrary to nature, but he did not mourn because he had offended God or because he was guilty before God. But the church points out the wrath of God and teaches that sin is a far greater evil than human reason thinks. Nor does the church reprove only external actions which are in conflict with the law of God or reason, as philosophy does; but it reproves the root and the fruit, the inner darkness of the mind, the doubts concerning the will of God, the turning away of the human will from God and the stubbornness of the heart against the law of God. It also reproves ignoring and despising the Son of God. These are grievous and atrocious evils, the enormity of which cannot be told. Therefore Christ says, "The Holy Spirit will reprove the world of sin, because they do not believe in Me, and of righteousness because I go to the Father, and of judgment, because the prince of this world is already judged" [John 16:8–11].

This message is entirely alien to civil judgments. Therefore He says that the world is reproved by the Holy Spirit, by the voice of the Gospel, not by human and civil judgments; and it is reproved of sin, namely for despising the Son of God, because people spurn the Gospel [and] the benefits of Christ, so that they do not come to God through faith in His Son but remain in everlasting doubt and flee from God or with horrible audacity dream up cults and idols.

Then He says, "He also reproves the world of righteousness" [John 16:10]. For wise men think that righteousness is some kind of universal discipline or obedience in keeping with laws, as they say. But the Gospel brings a far different righteousness. For this human discipline does not remove death, but the righteousness before God, by which God reckons us as righteous, accepted, and heirs of eternal life, abolishes sin and death, as He says, "This is My departure to the Father" [John 16:10], that is, My sacrifice and satisfaction for you and My going to the kingdom in which, as Mediator, I am perpetually your Mediator. I will sanctify and vivify you to eternal life; I will take away sin and death. This "going to the Father" and this "kingdom of Christ" justify us.

Third, He adds, "of judgment." The world always has stirred up and will always stir up great controversies against this teaching, and it has condemned and will condemn the Son of God, and the devil stirs up his instruments for blasphemous judgments and cruelty, as heresies, blasphemies, and savagery in every age show. But these ravings of the devil will not destroy the church. For the Holy Spirit will always encourage the church to set itself against godless judgments, and the church will finally conquer, because the devil has been condemned. Hence God confounds his judgments and his ravings.

Therefore when the Holy Spirit by the voice of the Gospel ministry reproves the world and shows whence sin comes, what it is, and how great an evil it is, we must hear the Holy Spirit as He teaches, for the benefits of Christ cannot be understood if we do not know what sin is. Indeed for this very reason, God, both by the voice of the ministry and by great calamities, exhorts the church, that we might recognize [His] wrath against sin and flee to the Son of God, the Mediator. And Christ summarizes [this] doctrine in the church thus: "Go, preaching repentance and remission of sins in My name" [Luke 24:47]. Further, it includes the acknowledgment of sin, that is, the fears which arise when we come to understand the wrath of God against sin. And Paul in the Epistle to the Romans deals particularly with this, so that in three passages he tells us what sin is, what the law produces, and what the grace of God is and accomplishes. Accordingly we should know that the teaching of these passages must be current in the church, clear, pure, and explicit.

Moreover, it is common in teaching to begin with definitions. Hence also the definition of sin must first be established, but I see that the writers who developed questions in regard to [the writings of] Peter the Lombard did not set forth one common definition which applied to original sin and actual sin, perhaps because they thought that no common definition could be set forth, since actual sin makes us guilty because of our action, while original sin holds us guilty both because of the fall of another person as well as because of our own uncleanness with which we are born.

They went on to imagine also this, that the law of God condemns only actual sin; this is false, as is clear from Romans 7.

The sense of the term in the Scriptures is clear; *sin* properly means something culpable and condemned by God unless there is forgiveness. This general description fits original sin and actual sin. But because mention is made only of the relationship, namely

guilt, the human mind asks also why man is guilty. Therefore I am using this definition, and I would wish there were one in the church, well-composed by the judgment of many teachers and devout people. Sin is a defect or an inclination or an action in conflict with the law of God, offending God, condemned by God, and making us worthy of eternal wrath and eternal punishments, unless there be forgiveness. In this definition there are elements, namely defect and inclination, which refer to original sin. The action includes all actual sins, inner and external.

The common element is the conflict with the law of God. For the Law not only speaks about actions, as [our] adversaries say, but also condemns the darkness, defects and depraved inclinations in the nature of man, as Paul very pointedly contends in Romans 7.

Then the descriptive terms are added: "condemned by God," "offending God," and "making us worthy of wrath and punishments," etc. The church particularly emphasizes these characteristics. For reason understands that wicked actions are against the law of God, but it ignores the wrath of God which follows. Therefore this point must be particularly considered as often as sin is mentioned, so that we may know that it means something culpable and condemned by God.

Now this definition is drawn from the words, "Cursed is he that does not continue in all things which are written in the Law" [Gal. 3:10]. The passage defines sin as disobedience cursed by God. And disobedience may be understood not only as actual but as universal, in the nature of man opposed to God. Furthermore, it is a dreadful addition to be called cursed by God, that is, something which God in His wrath rejects and in which He casts His creature away into horrible punishments.

The words of Paul agree with this definition, Rom. 1[:18], "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness," etc., and in Rom. 7[:13] Paul says, "Through the Law sin becomes exceedingly sinful," that is, the Law shows the wrath of God, and when this is recognized, then we understand that our uncleanness is not a small evil but is something culpable, condemned, and cursed by God because terrible punishments follow. Since all of this is the case, therefore as often as sin is mentioned, let this designation be discerned in the church; it speaks of judgment and of the wrath of God.

If anyone imagines that original sin is only guilt because of the sin of Adam without depravity in us, he is in error. But if anyone holds that we are born guilty both because of the fall of Adam and because of our inborn depravity, I will not keep him from adding this small part to the definition, that sin is both guilt because of Adam's fall and a defect or inclination or action in conflict with the law of God, etc. But I do not want to define everything to the last detail. This is clear, that because of the fall of Adam his posterity lacks that light which shone in the state of integrity and [also shines in] the restitution of the will and heart, and because of these evils there is no doubt that we are born culpable.

Now, having established the definition of sin in general, let us speak next of the different kinds of sin, original and actual, and let us not engage in wars of words and hairsplitting, but let us hold on to the necessary things taught in the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures and the sure testimonies of the ancient writers; if others set these forth better let us gladly use their language. For we do not fight about words but set forth necessary things. It does not displease me that the definition of Anselm is retained.

Original Sin

Original sin is the lack of original righteousness which is required to be present in us. But this brief and unclear description requires a longer explanation. For we must inquire what "original righteousness" means. Therefore we must add this explanation: Original righteousness was the acceptance of the human race before God, and in the very nature of man [1] light in his mind by which he could firmly assent to the Word of God and [2] turning of his will to God and [3] obedience of his heart in harmony with the judgment of God's law, which had been planted in his mind.

That original righteousness included all these things can be understood from this statement: man was created in the image and likeness of God, which Paul explains, and he teaches that the image of God is the mind which knows God, and a will which is free, righteous and in harmony with the law of God, as it says in Eph. 4[:24], "[The new man is] created in righteousness and true holiness." He calls true holiness all virtues which are related by a true heart to this end, that obedience is rendered to God [and] that God is loved and worshiped. Therefore after we have established what original righteousness means, then we can accordingly explain the opposite lack.

Original sin is the lack of original righteousness, that is, there is in those who are born of the seed of man a loss of the light in the mind and a turning of the will away from God and a stubbornness of the heart, so that they cannot truly obey the law of God, following the fall of Adam, on account of which corruption men are born guilty and the children of wrath, that is, condemned by God unless there be forgiveness. If anyone wishes to add that those who are born are also guilty because of the fall of Adam, I will not argue. But in point of fact the unbroken teaching of the church is that of the prophets, apostles, and the ancient writers: Original sin is not only imputation, but also in the very nature of man a darkness and depravity, as I have said. And I will explain this in greater detail under the prooftexts. And the statements of Augustine, Hugo, and Bonaventura agree with this meaning, even though other more recent [and] more profane writers have departed to some degree from the true position and devised in-

tricate sophistries. But Hugo clearly says: "Original sin is ignorance in the mind and disobedience in the will."

Testimonies

Now that the definition is set forth, we shall add the testimonies which affirm that all people born of the seed of man carry sin with them, so that they might understand that this doctrine is not something created by the disputes of recent writers but has been truly handed down by the Holy Spirit through the prophets and apostles.

And the proper locus for this doctrine is found in Rom. 5[:12 ff.], "By the sin of one all died." Therefore the others are guilty because of the fall of Adam. And lest it be understood that the others are guilty only without any propagation of corruption, he adds, "Death came upon all, for all have sinned." The Hebrew expression is: They have sinned, that is, they are guilty and have sin, an evil and condemned thing. If only actual transgressions are sins, then each would be guilty only of his own deed. Now since it clearly says that we are guilty because of the transgression of Adam, it testifies that there is some other sin in nature besides actual transgressions. And lest this sin be understood as only an imputation or guilt, the import of the words ought to be noted. "All have sinned," that is, the evil which is sin is passed on to all.

Again: "Sin reigned" [and] "death reigned," that is, people are crushed by the wrath of God, they are without the divine light, and they rush into horrible ragings and eternal destruction, just as it says in Rom. 3[:23], "All lack the glory of God," that is, that glory which God judges to be glory and by which He makes alive.

But from Romans 7 and 8 we learn much more clearly that original sin is not only an imputation or a servitude by which we are obligated to die, but also evil propagated in the very nature of man. Rom. 7[:23], "I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind." For he calls the "law of the members" something in us which contends with the law of God, namely defects and corrupt inclinations.

And Rom. 8[:7], "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor can it be subjected." This is a sad and horrible description of the human race. For the words clearly show that they are spoken not only of actual evil but also of the evil inherent in nature itself which is called "enmity against God." What more terrible thing can be said than that the nature of man is enmity against God, that is, that it constantly carries around with itself darkness and doubts about God, a [feeling of] security which neglects God, a diffidence which flees God, and a complex stubbornness. Profane and self-confident men do not understand these arcane evils, but the church in repentance to some degree recognizes them.

Eph. 2[:3], "We were by nature the children of wrath, even as the rest." The Hebrew term is "children of wrath," that is, guilty or condemned. Therefore [Paul] affirms that both the descendents of Abraham and the rest of mankind are condemned not only because of actual transgressions but also because of the evil nature which we bring with us by propagation itself. For this we need no example. And what kind this evil nature is, the statements from [Romans] 7 and 8 set forth.

John 3[:5], "Unless a person be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Since regeneration is necessary, it is clear that our old nature is guilty and unclean.

Also are added statements of the prophets. Ps. 51[:5], "Behold, I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother conceive me." For he does not deplore the sin of [his] mother, but his own. I was so conceived, that as soon as I was formed, sin was in my mass and in my very self, that is, I was not only guilty but there was born with me an aversion away from God and a corrupted tendency. Therefore he testifies that there is sin in human beings which they bring with them when they are born.

Gen. 8[:21], "The meditation of man's heart is evil from his youth." This passage shows that transgressions are not only brought on by habit but that in the very heart depravity is inherent in newborn children. For the words are clearer in the Hebrew reading: The work of the human heart, whether molded [*plasma*] or constructed, is evil, that is, the very mass of the heart is corrupt or certainly all passions or impulses or emotions [*hormai*] in the heart are evil things, that is, [they are] turned away from God.

Thus also Ps. [25:7] calls the sins of youth that whole heap which we bring with us as newborn children, darkness in the mind, a turning away from God in the will, and stubbornness of the heart.

Jer. 17[:9], "The human heart is perverse above all things and miserable and inscrutable," that is, turned away from God, and full of sorrows which arise from the fact that human minds do not know God and flee from Him. No one sufficiently understands how great these evils are.

These statements show that the statements of the prophets and apostles are in agreement. But brevity seems to escape human ears, especially since we in this our darkness and [sense of] security do not see the greatness of our misery; people who are apathetic, drunk with pleasures, or puffed up with glory care little about the wrath of God; and deceiving themselves, they minimize these evils, have doubts about God, neglect God, trust in their own wisdom and power, pride, ambition, and other flames of desires. Therefore these brief discourses, though they contain the entire doctrine of sin and the causes of human calamities, move minds too little. For the old custom of teaching was to include such brief statements, as maxims, the significant articles of doctrine which the church, through the ministry of the Gospel, needs to unfold and explain, so that in some way it might show the fullness of things which

are contained in them, just as it is said briefly [in Gen. 3:15], "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." But the church, in explaining [this passage], to some extent sees what great things it contains. Thus also many brief maxims have been handed down concerning this article on sin and concerning the causes of human calamities, which [maxims] in a very learned way include the sum [of the matter] in which [maxims] the correct meaning and the thrust of the words should be carefully considered.

Consider, I pray, how closely the statements of Jeremiah [17:9] and Paul [Rom. 8:7] agree: "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor can it be subjected." The statement is simple and clear; it affirms that in man in this mortal life there is and there remains a certain neglect of or flight from God and an anger against Him, and because God in turn disapproves, this statement is also added: This weak nature, [Paul] says, cannot be made subject to the law of God; it never satisfies it but always languishes in doubt, [false] security, diffidence, and various flames of desires. What sadder thing can be said than that in man there is enmity against God? But the Mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ, has suppressed this in the believers, as will be set forth under its own locus. The full meaning of Paul's statement cannot be set forth in words, but let our thoughts linger, let us look within ourselves, let us acknowledge and deplore our uncleanness and seek the Gospel regarding the Mediator.

Now compare the statement of Jeremiah, "The human heart is perverse above all things and miserable and inscrutable." First, it is called perverse, that is, turned away from God. This completely agrees with Paul who says [Rom. 8:7], "The heart is inimical to God." For it is turned away, is not governed by the light of God, is disturbed by doubts, does not acknowledge the wrath and mercy [of God], does not have fear, love, or trust in God, loves itself, takes pleasure in and trusts in our wisdom, dreams up notions about God and has capricious impulses which deviate from the law of God, ambition, desire for vengeance, and other passions. Then the punishments for the defects are described when [Jeremiah] says "miserable" or "full of sorrows." The heart deprived of the light and consolation of God is oppressed by sorrows, hopelessness, and eternal sadness. Many frightful sins are involved in these penalties, and the evil is so great that its magnitude cannot be fully understood by us or other creatures.

This statement has the same meaning [Ps. 31:22], "I said in my dismay," that is, in my alarm or dread, " 'Every man is a liar,' " that is, when I am terrified by the recognition of my sins and the wrath of God, I recognized that all men are liars, that is, they do not believe correctly about God, they have doubts about Him, they do not sufficiently fear [His] wrath nor sufficiently trust in [His] mercy.

I have cited testimonies and have touched on brief explanations to alert the reader that because of brevity he not miss these points but retain the simple and natural meaning over against the Pelagians and many other capricious spirits. The Pelagians deny the whole doctrine of original sin, even without the name. Recent ones, like Occam and many others, retain the name "original sin" but minimize the matter. They deny that these evils are things that conflict with the law of God, darkness in the mind, [and] the stubbornness in the will and heart which is called concupiscence. But they clearly are refuted by the testimony of Paul, Romans 7 and 8, as I shall again point out below. They call these evils only punishments for original sin, whereas they are at the same time punishments for the first fall and sins in individuals as they are born. Therefore in order that this matter may become clearer, I shall set forth the causes and effects.

The efficient causes of the first fall are the devil and the will of Adam and Eve, which assented to the devil and of its own freedom turned itself away from the command of God.

We speak of efficient causes as those which merit something. Thus Adam and Eve are the efficient causes who merited guilt for themselves and their posterity as well as these very defects or depravity which followed the fall, when the light of God was quenched. For after our first parents transgressed, they lost that firm knowledge of God which had been planted in [their] minds and the uprightness of will and the agreement of [their] heart with the law of God. And as they were after the fall, so was their posterity.

Where is original sin? In the soul and in the sentient powers and their organs, because in the mind is darkness, in the will is a turning away from God, a disordered and fickle love of ourselves, an inclination which is corrupt, and in the heart a stubbornness against the right judgment of the mind. Thus in the location of a disease, so to say, or with the subject pointed out, which they call "the matter in which" [*materia in qua*], the evil can be more properly examined.

With regard to the formal [principle] judgment is simple for the learned, though the uninstructed are troubled in various ways regarding this question. I do not want to cause wars of words in the church, but I shall set forth the correct position clearly and without sophistry and without confusion. Those who have been properly informed know that universally the formal [principle] of sin is guilt or condemnation of a person who is guilty. But this relationship to some evil took place by accident. Therefore we must seek the closest foundation of this relationship, or, as they call it, the nearest material [principle]. Now, the foundation of this guilt is the very defect in man with which we are born, which they call either defects or perverse inclinations or concupiscence. For all these terms refer to the same evil, or rather a great confusion of all evils. For we must understand concupiscence not of the appetites which were created in our nature but of the disorder [*ataxia*] of all [our] appetites. For in these vices a dialectician

knows that its certain formal [principle] is proper to vice, namely the defect of uprightness which strays from the law of God, or a disorder [*ataxia*].

It is manifest that ignorance of God, doubts, lack of fear, and love of God are defects. The defect of disorder [*ataxia*] is also in love for ourselves, in that, viz., when the [proper] order is upset, Saul loves himself more than God. The same judgment also applies to other wicked inclinations. Writers have called this disorder [*ataxia*] of all desires concupiscence.

We must also carefully distinguish *ataxia* from the appetites themselves which were created by God, as I shall set forth more fully later. Therefore since the question is raised as to the formal [principle] of original sin, the correct answer is guilt. But then we must also ask what the basis of this relationship is. Now it is, as I have said the very wickedness with which we are born, which is the evil which contends against the law of God. Because it is a great confusion of evils, just as if someone would say that there are many diseases at the same time, it can be easily understood that the formal [principle] of these confusions is a defect. Moreover, add also guilt when sin is not forgiven; but when it is forgiven, there nevertheless still remains in this life this confusion to a great extent, [and] therefore the defects remain which are the formal [principles] of this confusion.

These things are clear and involve nothing confusing. The monks in their unlearned way omitted guilt and said that the formal [principle] of sin is a defect, and that it is removed in the regenerate, and that there remains the material [principle], which they understood as the very appetites which were created by God, which are good things. But they did not understand what they were saying. For since the diseases remain, that is, the doubts, the negligence, [and] the stubbornness, it is easy to understand that the defects remain. For the names of the diseases which remain indicate defects.

The Holy Spirit begins to heal [our] nature, but the whole disease is not all at once suddenly removed. Just as the Samaritan in Luke 10 did not all at once cure the wounded man, but first poured wine into [his] wounds to wash out the blood and then poured in oil to cut down the suffering and then he began to close the wound so that it might heal; and after that, when the wound had been bound up, he had the invalid put on his beast and then cared for in the inn, so Christ puts us on His body, because He carried the punishment for our sins, and pours the Gospel into our wounds, He then binds them up, covers them and forgives our sins. But He still wishes the diseases in the church to be cured by continual exercises of the cross and of prayer. This imagery shows that in the remission of original sin the guilt is taken away, but the wounds are not suddenly healed. But as the formal [principle] of a wound is the laceration of the parts which ought to be inviolate, so also in the depravity of the mind, the will, and the heart there are certain lacerations as it were, which are truly grievous and savage, whose formal [principles] a dialectician well understands to be defects or deprivations or losses [*sterēseis*] viz., disorders [*ataxias*] which deviate from the law of God.

When the final cause [*causa finalis*] is spoken of in this locus the punishments must be reviewed and the effects. The punishments for original sin are the death of the body and the other enormous calamities which arise out of human ignorance and the weakness of all [our] powers; likewise the wrath of God and eternal damnation, as Paul says, "We were by nature the children of wrath" [Eph. 2:3].

Likewise there is the tyranny of the devil, who in a frightful way impels weak ones so they rush from one evil to another, just as Oedipus in his ignorance killed his father, and later in his ignorance took his own mother as wife. The sons born of this union contended for the kingdom and wounded and slew each other. The father, when his eyes had been gouged out, was driven from the city and after that was swallowed up by the earth. Such loathsome things befall a person who is not defended against the attacks of the devil. Nor is there anyone who does not feel the sharp and terrible bite of the devil, from which one must learn this truth: "The serpent will lie in wait for His heel" [Gen. 3:15]. But let us again learn the promise: The head of the serpent is crushed by our Lord Jesus Christ.

The punishments for the first fall are manifold human ignorance and this stubbornness of the passions which is called concupiscence. But at the same time this is both the punishment for the first fall and sin itself in the newborn, that is, something culpable and condemned by God. Nor have the monks correctly said that this depraved inclination, which they call tinder, is only punishment. This list of the causes and effects will help the studious to understand the doctrine of the church concerning original sin without perplexity.

Now we must warn the reader about certain statements [such as], "Nothing is sin unless it is voluntary." This statement is traditional regarding civil crimes. For only voluntary wrongs are punished by a public court of law, so that an accidental killing is not punished by the law offices. But we must not transfer this statement to the doctrine of the Gospel regarding sin and to the judgment of God.

Augustine aptly says that original sin is voluntary because we delight in it. However, this sagacious interpretation departs far from the praetorian statement. It is more proper not to mix intemperately statements pertaining to civil matters with the Gospel. It is therefore sufficient to respond by saying that the former statement speaks of a forensic judgment.

This statement is also highly touted: "Nature is good." This is true insofar as the rest of God's work. But the nature of man has been horribly injured and contaminated, just as the picture of the wounded man in Luke 10 depicts. We have been despoiled of the gifts of a perfect nature, that is, a firm knowledge of God,

wisdom, righteousness, and, besides this, the rest of [our] nature has been wounded, namely by corrupt concupiscence, death, and the various evils of soul and body.

Moreover, we must distinguish those things which are works of God remaining in man from those things which are wicked per se, for example, the knowledge of mathematics is a good thing because it has been planted in man by God. We must understand this about all true knowledge, each matter in its own order. Therefore the knowledge of the law of nature is also a good thing. For though after the fall of Adam it began to be darker and assent was disturbed by doubts, yet as much of that light as remains is a good thing and a work of God. Therefore arts and beneficial laws constructed on the basis of this knowledge are good things. But in the meantime many doubts arise as to whether God cares for us, whether He punishes, whether He hears [us], whether He wants to help us, receive us, give us eternal glory, etc. These doubts are in themselves wicked because they are evils which conflict with the law of God.

Thus our emotions are twofold. Some of our desires are commanded by the law of God, such as love for [our] children, spouse, [and] parents. Others are prohibited by the law of God, such as despising God, raging against God, hatred, adultery.

Furthermore, although in this corruption of nature the affections commanded by the law of God are corrupted and by accident become wicked because they are not ruled by love for God, as when people often sin against God because of [their] children; yet tender love toward children itself is commanded by God and remains in the regenerate and should become purer. Abraham dearly loved his sons Ishmael and Isaac, but he still put the command of God first.

Therefore we must not imagine that all affections must be removed from man or that all have been condemned in the same way, as the fanatical Anabaptists profess a Stoic freedom from emotion. In fact there is no life without feeling, without desire, without some affections, and the law of God enjoins regarding affections: "You shall love the Lord your God with all [your] heart, etc. You shall love your neighbor as yourself." And in Rom. 1[:31] among the horrible crimes is "without natural affection" [*astorgos*].

Therefore there were affections in uncorrupted nature, but well ordered and pure: love for God, parents, children, spouse, brothers and other people, happiness in the knowledge of God and His order in the use of creatures, hatred against the devil. And in the life eternal there will be great happiness in God's presence and love for God and all the heavenly hosts. Thus there were in Christ true affections, but well ordered and pure: love for God, love for [His] mother, disciples, [and] friends, happiness, sorrow, [and] anger, as is said in Mark 3[:5]: "He looked around in anger." And with regard to [His] mercy it is said significantly that Christ was moved with compassion. And in regard to great sorrow it is said in Matt. 26[:38], "My soul is sorrowful, even unto death." Therefore we must admit that affections have been placed in the nature of human beings, and God wanted also that they themselves should be images and signs of His will. God truly loves us, just as man by nature loves [his] children; God is truly moved with compassion toward us when He sees that we have fallen into eternal misery, which He Himself understands. Just as we by nature are moved with compassion when misfortune befalls a child, so does Christ say, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son for us" [John 3:16]. And John says, "God is love" [1 John 4:8], that is, He is filled with true love toward us, not willing [our destruction]. And Paul says to Titus, 3[:4], "The kindness and love of our Saviour toward mankind appeared." Thus God wanted [His] love, [*storgē*] impressed on us, to be a reminder of His will.

Hence [affections] must be carefully considered and properly controlled. For now after the Fall they range rashly and are perverted; his is the more to be lamented because they were given to remind us of the will of God. Nevertheless love is to be distinguished from prohibited affections, from the despising of God, from raging against God, from hatred, from rejoicing in iniquity, as when Herodias, Fulvia, etc., rejoiced in revenge, and from other follies which are beyond number. And we must know that affections prohibited by the law of God are in themselves wicked and must be suppressed.

Regarding the common saying, "Nature is good," I replied that we distinguish between things that were created and depravity, which was not created. In the wrath of Achilles there is a heroic good thing, because it is truly a work of God; but it is corrupted because it is not ruled by the knowledge of God and trust in Him is tangled and worship and trust in God do not shine forth. These defects are not minor sins; hence also a good thing that is corrupted is rejected and becomes culpable.

On the other hand, similar anger in David is purer because there are added knowledge of God, fear and worship of Him, and trust in Him. Thus we should understand that in the regenerate there remains love but that it is more properly controlled and brought back into order and within its bounds and made purer. It remains for [something] to be said about the common question: After baptism is it correct to say that there is sin in infants or is concupiscence a sin? Again, is it correct to say that in regenerate adults there is sin? I reply concerning regenerate adults that all must concede that sin remains. Hence John says, "If we say that we do not have sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" [1 John 1:8]. Therefore we confess that there are many flames of lusts in the regenerate which they say are sins, because they all together suddenly captivate an assent of the will, which is often hard to shake off.

But although [the adversaries] confess these things, yet they minimize these very evils and profess that they are speaking only about actual sins, which they deny are in their nature mortal. And the root of these actions, namely, the budding disease which remains in the regenerate, that is the depraved inclination, they say is absolutely not sin, is it an evil which is in conflict with the law of God.

Moreover consider how great an effrontery it is to neglect these evils, namely doubts concerning God, a [false] security that disregards the wrath of God, a diffidence which flees from God, and the many other plagues which even if they are not always observed, yet are present and often break out, so that in times of calamity Cato sinks completely into darkness and denies that providence exists and Saul is angry with God for punishing him so harshly. These things must be recognized as sins, not concealed, so that we may learn how to contend against them and seek aid against them.

Therefore we answer in this way: In Baptism sin is taken away inasfar as it applies to guilt or imputation, but the disease itself remains, which is an evil in conflict with the law of God, worthy of eternal death unless there is forgiveness, as it is said, "Blessed are they whose sins are covered" [Ps. 32:1]. Nor are we arguing about the term sin; the disagreement is about things. The adversaries contend that this disease which remains in the regenerate is not an evil which is in conflict with the law of God. This error must be censured. And the testimonies of Paul are clear. In Romans 7 and 8 Paul clearly says, "The law in our members is in conflict with the law of [our] mind and with the law of God." No amount of juggling can escape these testimonies.

But the adversaries set forth many false hypotheses. First they say nothing in regard to the darkness of the mind and the wickedness in the will. Then they understand concupiscence only with reference to the senses and consider it to be a natural desire, although they ought to consider it a disorder [*ataxia*] of the desires and include both the darkness of the mind and of an evil will together. Third, they also add this false hypothesis that the law of God damns only actual sins. This idea transforms the law of God into a philosophy which speaks only of our discipline. After that these fancies obscure the doctrine of grace. For they imagine that one is righteous because of his fulfillment of the Law and they lose the light of the doctrine of faith.

But the entire teaching of the prophets and apostles cries out that people do not satisfy the law of God and that sin clings in all; and it points out the Mediator [and] says that for His sake we are received and pronounced righteous by faith in Him. Accordingly we must recognize our misery in order that the benefits of Christ may be understood.

But this disagreement cannot be settled by the judgments of hypocrites. Hypocrites have always dissented and [still] dissent from the true church concerning this question, because human reason without divine light does not perceive how great evils these inner sins are, even though from the great confusion of life and the greatness of the calamities it ought to be able to estimate them in one way or another.

Actual Sins

As I have said, original sin is an evil, a darkness in the mind, a turning away from God's will, a stubbornness of heart against the law of God. These evils are not called actions, but from them do arise actual inward and outward sins: in the mind, serious doubts and blasphemies, in the will, false security and neglect of God, lack of trust, self-love, placing our own life and will ahead of God's command; and then, finally, great confusion and mountains of sinful desires. Nor should we imagine that this original evil is an inactive thing. For even though a few men do bridle themselves with honorable discipline, yet In their hearts there are great doubts and many things which drive them away from God, and many things which go counter to the law of God as is manifest when Jeremiah says, 17:9, "The heart of man is deceitful and desparately wicked, and who can know it!"

Thus along with this original evil there are at the same time actual sins which in the unregenerate are all mortal. And the whole person is condemned with his fruits, as John says, "He who does not believe in the Son . . . the wrath of God remains upon him," John 3:36. Therefore, although there are great good qualities in such men as Aristides, Fabius, Pomponius, Atticus, and others, yet we need to know that even in them original sin was manifest, and their hearts were full of doubts and many evil desires, and they were lacking in the knowledge of Christ, and there was no true invocation of God on their part.

Then we must consider this point, that most great men, in whom has been found some outstanding virtue, were also corrupted by some shameful crimes or weaknesses from which it is possible to understand that they too were under the power of the devil, as when we witness the great flaw in the character of Hercules, Themistocles, Pausanius, Alexander, and others who even at the beginning of their careers had been very upright. These examples should serve as a warning to us not to disparage the knowledge of Christ, as many do who elevate the heathen to heaven. Indeed, for this very reason we should fear the wrath of God, when we see that they have been rejected and horribly condemned in different ways, even though they had many outstanding virtues, lest we also despise the Son of God or tread underfoot the blood of the Son of God by imagining that men can be saved without Him. We do profess these things with regard to the unregenerate, in whom all actual sins, as well as original sin, are mortal.

But when we speak of those who have been reconciled, we will then learn to distinguish between venial and mortal sins and learn that original sin is called venial sin and the much greater inward sins, which are in conflict with God, are actual sins which the regenerate still fight against along with the many sins of ignorance and omission. Nor should we minimize these evils, as the sententiaries do when they imagine that a certain kind of sin is venial if it is beside the law of God and not directly contrary to the law of God. This error must of necessity be rejected. For those sins which are called venial are great evils which are in conflict with the law of God, which of their own nature are mortal sins, that is, sins on account of which man is damned by eternal wrath, unless for the sake of the Son of God they are forgiven to those who have been reconciled. Moreover, it is necessary to distinguish the sins which remain in this life in the regenerate from those sins on account of which grace, the Holy Spirit, and faith are lost. Therefore actual sin is mortal sin in one who falls after his reconciliation, in an inward action as well as an outward one which conflicts with the law of God and is done in violation of conscience. For such an act makes a man guilty of eternal wrath. The idea that some people have that in going against conscience the elect do not drive out the Holy Spirit is a manifest error which must be condemned. Nor in judging concerning our sin must we look into the matter of our election, but rather keep our eyes on the Word of God which has been given to us as showing us God's will, and we must be fearful, knowing the judgment of God as set forth in His Word and in example, so that we do not become hardened in foolhardy complacency and blindness.

Adam and Eve were elect, and yet they actually lost the Holy Spirit in the Fall. They were turned away from God and rendered guilty of eternal wrath. As Paul says, "By one man's sin condemnation came upon all men" [Rom. 5:18].

And Deut. 9:20 says, "The Lord was so angry with Aaron that He was going to destroy him," but Moses prayed for him. Nor can we escape the very sad words of the Holy Spirit when He says that God was "very angry," nor let us imagine that God is made of stone or is a stoic. For although at one point God is angry and at another point man is, yet we are certainly correct in believing that God was angry at Aaron and that at that time Aaron was not in a state of grace but was guilty of eternal punishment. We must shrink in horror from the fall of Aaron, who had yielded in fear to the raging of those who were trying to reinstate the false religion of the Egyptians. Warned by this example we must not become complacent, but rather acknowledge that the elect and regenerate can also fall in a terrible way and that those who fall must acknowledge the wrath of God and again be turned back to Him, so that we are not so terrified by the greatness of the fall that we do not come back to God. For "grace abounds over sin," as we must also say at this point, Rom. 5:20. And the story of Aaron testifies to the fact that to those who are repentant for their great and awful sins there is forgiveness, as we must understand regarding the falls of David, Solomon, and Manasseh when they fell.

And John clearly states [in 1 John 3:7–8], "Let no man deceive you: He who does righteousness is righteous . . . he who commits sin is of the devil." And Eph. 5:6, "Because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the disobedient."

Therefore it is manifest that the elect and the regenerate can lose grace, and we must distinguish between the sins which remain in all the regenerate in this life and do not drive away the Holy Spirit from the other lapses on account of which grace is lost.

And Paul gives us this distinction in Rom. 8:13, "If you live according to the flesh you will die, but if through the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you will live." We must admit that in the saints there are deeds of the flesh, that is, many wicked desires, doubts, carnal security, lack of faith, erring trust, corrupt attitudes. But, he says, against these we must fight with the aid of the Spirit, that is, with spiritual exercises, with prayer to God, with fear, faith, with spiritual endurance and chastity which keeps our eyes on God. And the regenerate will remain in grace, even if they have wicked desires, as long as they continue to fight against them and as long as they by faith acknowledge forgiveness for the sake of Christ. But if they do not resist, he says they shall die.

Furthermore, in order that we can recognize who they are who do not resist, He has established a standard, namely, those who sin against conscience, that is, those who knowingly and willfully indulge in such activities or even tempt themselves to an outward act by wicked emotions and lusts. Thus we must carefully teach people concerning this distinction, so that they may beware of lapses against conscience, and when they have fallen, again to turn back to God.

We must reject the Stoic arguments of those who are contending that all sins are equal, and that the elect always retain the Holy Spirit, even when they have succumbed to frightful lapses. For even though I do not wish to start any squabbles over words, yet it is important to warn those who are concerned that it is common to call that sin mortal sin which can be said to rule or dominate us. For when Paul says in Rom. 6:12, "Let not sin rule in your mortal body," he is dealing precisely with this distinction between sins of which we have just spoken. We confess that there is sin in the regenerate, but it does not rule or hold dominion as long as he does not yield to sin but resists it. And if sin does rule, it brings eternal destruction, and the emphasis of the words points to the wickedness and power of sin.

Sin holds dominion when its guilt is not forgiven. Then it kindles the wrath of God and tears man away from God, and man under the impulse of his own weakness and the prompting of the devil is turned away from God and driven to the point of rushing from one evil to

another and piling up crimes and punishments for himself, as Saul did even though the Holy Spirit had been given to him and he had been adorned with great powers and victories; yet he fell prey to the first temptations to emulate things which at first were easy to resist, just as Aaron was overcome by jealousy against his brother. Sin began to dominate Saul when he yielded to it, that is, he remained guilty, the wrath of God was kindled, the Holy Spirit was driven out and distressed, his mind was deserted by God, he became increasingly weak and yielded to his lusts. The devil then stepped up his raging. Then followed the slaughter of the priests and the many public disasters, until finally, with his army destroyed, Saul killed himself and went to eternal punishment. We must often consider these tragic pictures, so that we may be able to understand the magnitude of God's anger against sin.

All history is filled with these sad examples, and when we read or hear of them it should remind us that we are being taught by these examples what it means that "sin has dominion over us."

An Anabaptist ruler was guilty of sedition under the pretext of religion, and he boasted falsely that he was acting under divine inspiration, gave way to his evil desires, killed his wife, and finally, when captured, was tortured with hot irons. These are examples of the domination of sin.

And this concept of having dominion is very old, for in Ps. 119:133 it says, "Order my steps . . . ., and let not any iniquity have dominion over me." These words should be used by us in our daily prayers, and at the same time we must understand that the sin which holds dominion over us must be avoided at all costs. "Order my steps . . . and let sin have no dominion over me," so that I do not become a vessel of wrath, so that I am not rejected as Cain, Saul, Judas, Ahab, Oedipus, Atreus, Thyestes, Nero, and other scourges of the human race have been.

Moreover, I think that the term "dominion" or "domination" is taken from Moses, for in Gen. 4:7 it says, "If you do good, you will be accepted, but if you do evil, your sin lies in wait until it shall be revealed. It desires to rule over you, and you must have dominion over it." This warning of the Law must be carefully remembered, for it contains the teaching of three important articles. First, it teaches the difference between inward righteousness and external sacrifices, namely, that a sacrifice is pleasing to God if the person is good, or that sacrifices do not please God if the heart is godless. Second, there is a warning concerning the coming judgment and a description of the carnal security of this world, when it says, "Sin lies in wait," that is, it is not recognized, it does not inspire fear until the heart is weighed down with a sense of the wrath of God and His punishments. Thus Nero and Caligula were completely secure as they rejoiced in their madness, and this is the case with a great many people, until the punishment arrives. This is a universal warning and testimony as to why He teaches that universal judgment still remains over us. For when the crimes of the ungodly are not punished in this life, it is necessary that there still remain another life and another judgment in which all crimes will be punished. Thus in this first proclamation the doctrine of the coming judgment is treated. Third, concerning the beginning of obedience, the Scripture says, "Sin desires to rule over you, and you must have dominion over it."

Since we have already spoken regarding the judgment of God, the question can be asked: What shall I do, when a corrupt desire is kindled within me? The answer is that God gave the Law in the first place and gave commandments, in order that we might contend against our wicked desires. But it is not sufficient to know the Law. It is also necessary to know whether our diligence and effort to produce good desires is pleasing to God and how in our great state of weakness the devil can be overcome and our natural weakness can be conquered. These things can be learned by comparing them with the promise: "The Seed of the woman will bruise the head of the serpent," just as there is no doubt that the fathers applied the promise to the preaching of the Law and taught their sons where the stubbornness of human desires had come from and that reconciliation had been promised for the sake of the coming Seed, and for this reason God was going to come to the aid of our weakness and would repress the devil.

John with great understanding interprets the promise, saying, "The Son of God has come to destroy the works of the devil" [1 John 3:8], that is, that He might free us from sin and help and defend us against the devil, so we are able to obey God, and that He might finally abolish sin and death and establish righteousness and eternal life. Thus the fathers taught not only the Law, that our desires might be held in check, but they also taught how in this great weakness of ours obedience might be achieved and how God can be pleased, all of which is embedded in the word "to have dominion." For one cannot have dominion without the aid of our Mediator, that is, without being freed from guilt and overcoming Satan and our own weakness.

We must also add those concepts which are spoken in the Gospel concerning the forgiveness of sin, faith, and the help of the Holy Spirit. Likewise elsewhere the doctrine of the new obedience has been fully treated, showing how these passages in Genesis give a summary of the entire matter. These remarks also have been made to shed fuller light. It is sufficient regarding the word "dominion" or "domination" of sin to give this warning which is fully descussed elsewhere, namely that ignorance and sins of omission are also mortal sins. Immediately after the promise was given regarding the Liberator who was to come, whose memory all nations should keep, it was told among the Gentiles, and then the Gospel was spread abroad throughout the whole world with many great testimon-

ies, and the voice came from the heavens, "Hear Him" [Matt. 17:5]. Thus no one is excused because of his ignorance of the Gospel. Indeed the Holy Spirit expressly points to this sin of ignorance, as Christ says, "The Holy Spirit convinces the world of sin, because they do not believe in Me" [John 16:8–9].

Locus 6
The Divine Law

The Law is a teaching given by God, which directs what we are to be like, what we are to do, what we must omit. The Law requires perfect obedience toward God. It pronounces that God is angry and punishes with eternal death those who do not present perfect obedience. This definition is taken from the law of God itself and from many statements of Christ. The Law contains precepts and promises to which are added the condition of complete fulfillment of the Law. Likewise, the threats. Precepts are spoken regarding complete obedience: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your strength," Deut. 6:5. Likewise, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," Lev. 19:18. Again, "You shall not covet," Ex. 20:17. And the warning says, "Cursed is he who does not abide by the words of the Law to do them," Deut. 27:26. Again Christ says in Matt. 25:41, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire."

First it is necessary to give this warning, that there is a great and immeasurable difference between human law and divine law. But just as the people could not see the shining face of Moses and looked at him behind a veil, so the minds and eyes of all men see the law of God from a distance. Nor do they understand what the nature of the judgment is, but they universally think that the teaching pertains to outward works in the same way that they consider the precepts of Phoclydes or Theognis. But there are more reasons for giving and revealing the divine law than this, as shall be mentioned later. Thus we should not regard the law of God as the Decemvirales tables of the Romans, which perished many centuries before, along with their legal system and their courts. But the law of God is an eternal and immovable rule of the divine mind and a judgment against sin, a judgment impressed on human minds, often proclaimed by the voice of God, of which Christ says, "I have not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it" [Matt. 5:17].

Therefore we must consider the difference. Human law only demands or forbids external works. Philosophy sometimes teaches that more is required, such as that the action be an honorable one and not merely external or simulated, but an upright judgment in the mind and in the will a free choice or decision for acting correctly. Therefore the Law demands a certain prudence or moderation of the emotions and the actions, which is properly called "ethics." But this law does not accuse our natural uncleanness, nor does it pronounce judgment on all the sins which are in conflict with the First Table—the doubting of God, the heart which lacks fear and love for God, our weakness of faith, and evils like this which cling in our nature.

But the law of God not only requires outward action or that love which comes from bridled emotions, of which the philosophers speak, but it commands that our nature obey God perfectly, have an unshaken knowledge of God, true or constant fear of Him, firm trust in God, and a burning love for Him. But because the nature of man is not such, the voice of the Law is the judgment of God, condemning the sin in our nature. Paul is expressing this concept when he says, "The Law is spiritual" [Rom. 7:14], that is, it is not only a civil wisdom giving commandments concerning our outward actions in our life in society, but it is a far different teaching, which demands spiritual actions, strong knowledge concerning God, a burning and perfect love, as the Law says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart" [Deut. 6:5].

But the monks speak of the law of God as they do of civil righteousness; they say that the law of God is satisfied through this civil or philosophical training, that is, through outward works and whatever the will attempts to do, even though in the mind doubts remain and in the will and heart many evil inclinations still exist. And they taught that these doubts and corrupt desires are not sins.

Therefore they imagine that men are righteous and pleasing to God because of the works which they think satisfy the law of God; they have not taught that men are righteous in the sense of having been reconciled to God and pleasing to Him by faith for the sake of our Mediator, Christ. But Paul refutes these pharisaic errors and affirms that this weak nature of man cannot satisfy the law of God nor placate the wrath of God nor take away sin through the works of the Law. But he affirms that the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, has been sent to take away our sins and give us righteousness and eternal life, as we shall discuss more fully under the proper locus.

Classification of the Laws

First we shall review these classifications: The divine law, the natural law, and human law. Divine laws are those which have been given by God at some particular time and are found in written form in the writings of Moses and the books of the Gospel. The natural law, as I shall indicate below, is the natural knowledge of God and of the governance of our conduct, or the difference between honorable and shameful behavior, which has been divinely implanted in the human race, just as our knowledge of numbers has been divinely implanted in the minds of men. Therefore, it agrees with the part of the Law which is called the natural law, as we shall show below. For first we must distinguish the classifications of the divine law.

Although from the beginning of the world there has sounded in the church the voice of the Law and the voice of the promise of grace, yet in a certain sense when the nation of Israel was established, the law of God was promulgated, for God willed by a public and manifest testimony to set forth that knowledge which at creation He had instilled in the minds of men, so that He might show His judgment against sin. But because an entire civil structure was being established, not only were laws set forth regarding the moral conduct of individuals, but also there were added laws regarding civil matters and other ceremonies.

Thus there are three general divisions of the Mosaic law: the moral laws, the ceremonial, and the civil or judicial laws. This distinction must be carefully studied because even though the political structure established by Moses has now been destroyed, yet the distinction of the laws must be taken into consideration. The ceremonial laws of Moses and the civil laws are not commanded to the other nations, nor are they binding upon us. They were given to the people of Israel for that time in order that the political structure might continue for a definite period of time, so that there might be a specific place in which the Christ should be born and reveal Himself, be proclaimed, and become the sacrifice and openly complete the work of our eternal life.

But there is still another classification of laws which are called moral laws, which are the eternal mind and rule of God and are not changed by the passing of time. Always and from all eternity God has willed that His creatures should love and fear God and that the rational creature be pure. There are also moral laws which give commands concerning the acknowledgment of God in our hearts and our obedience toward God and concerning good works toward men, as well as concerning righteousness, chastity, truthfulness, and temperance. The moral laws have been summarized by God in a remarkable way on one small table, which is called the Decalogue. It is common to call it the Decalogue when we are referring to the moral law, a term which can be easily understood without any war of words. Therefore, there are moral laws and those which are contained in the Decalogue, as we shall indicate below, and there are repetitions and explanations of the Decalogue wherever we read them in the writings of the prophets and apostles. Since these laws are the eternal rule of the mind of God, they always sounded forth in the church, even before the time of Moses, and they shall remain in force forever and apply also to the gentiles. There are also many natural laws in the civil and ceremonial laws which also are perpetual, such as the law which prohibits incestuous practices, Leviticus 18, because the reverence for blood relationships pertains to these virtues. God has clearly said that the Canaanites should be destroyed because of their incestuous lusts. Therefore when the gentiles, even before the promulgation of the law of Moses, were condemned for this crime, it is certain that they were condemned by the eternal law of God and the judgment of nature.

Exposition of the Decalogue

A reverent consideration of the Decalogue is most useful and spiritually uplifting. For it contains so complete and sublime a teaching that it can never be satisfactorily understood or exhausted. More and more we must come to detest the ravings of those who imagine that they can satisfy the law of God or even do more than it requires. These are not the voices of men, but they have been sown by the devil, who by this kind of bitter humor plays with the human race which has fallen from its dignity and purity. For when God shows in His law the condition in which human nature was created, from whence we have fallen, and into what miseries and darkness we have been degraded, the devil, as if playing with us, spreads abroad voices which ironically try to minimize the law of God. Therefore the reverent should know that the errors of the Pharisees and the monks are not inconsequential, and they should pray God that the veil of our hearts, which hinders us from seeing the law of God properly, might be drawn away, for we must seriously consider it as being the voice of God which contains far greater things than we can completely comprehend.

Above all we must consider these four points concerning the Law.

In the first place, the Law instructs as to the purpose for which human nature was created and what the dignity and purity of man was like in which he was created. For human nature would have been as this Law describes him, with full knowledge of God, always worshiping Him, always obedient to Him, always in all his works looking to His presence and guidance, observing the righteous order of things in all his actions, without any wickedness or calamities or death.

In the second place, the Law instructs us concerning our present wretched state. For we now see that our nature has fallen from its original honorable position, is in conflict with the Law, is filled with darkness and contempt for God, without any order, filled with corrupt desires of every kind. We also recognize that our sin is the cause of death and immeasurable disasters. But yet we do not understand our wretchedness, nor do we really hear the Law unless with true terror and suffering we recognize the wrath of God against sin. When this happens, we begin to a slight degree to understand the Law of God and the wretchedness of our human condition. As David cries, the wrath of God could not be endured if God wished to punish sin in keeping with our merits. "If You should mark iniquities, O Lord, Lord, who shall stand?" Ps. 130:3. Our sins are more numerous and greater in each of us than can be understood. Furthermore, note the emphasis of the passage, "Who shall stand?" No one has

such strength that he can bear the calamity of our human condition, which is the punishment for our sins. Just as David felt the penalties of his adultery—the killing of his sons, the treason of a son, the marriages which were polluted by incest, the exile, the overthrow of his cities, and other incalculable evils—so in his punishments he learned to understand this verse, "Who shall stand?" Yet these present evils are not worthy to be compared with eternal punishments. Thus, as often as we recite this verse, "If You should mark iniquities, O Lord, Lord, who shall stand?" we should understand that the wrath of God against sin is real and beyond measure, and we should regard the whole law, and consider what mountains of punishment have been laid upon the human race, and regard our own and our common troubles and pray God that He would mitigate His wrath which no one can endure or bear. If He put forth His wrath, men would have to crumble and perish in present and eternal punishments. Likewise, similar passages in the psalms warn us concerning the true understanding of the Law and the knowledge of our sin and the wrath and punishments of God.

In the third place, the Law by implication quietly instructs us concerning the restoration of the human race and concerning eternal life. It further points out to what greater excellence we are recalled. For because God has repeated the word of the Law after the fall of our nature, He surely wills that the Law in some way be fulfilled. Therefore there will be a restoration of the human race and there will be an eternal life. Because we see that in this life the law of God is not satisfied, the teaching concerning this restoration is more clearly set forth in the promises.

In the fourth place, when we have thus considered how great is the misery of the human race under the oppression of sin, the wrath of God, and death, and have understood that the voice of the Law is a sentence, a chain, a witness, and the messenger of His unspeakable wrath, we must always turn from this area to the Son of God and consider His sacrifice, which alone has endured this wrath for us, undergone the burden of the Law, and pleased the Father. We must consider the benefits of the Son of God, which He poured out to cover our sin. Also we should know that we are called by the Son of God Himself in order that once again that purity described in the Law might begin to take root in us, as we shall indicate later in the proper locus.

The Decalogue

There are two tables. The First Table contains the works by which we deal with God directly and properly, that is, the principal union and outward worship of God. The Second Table contains the works toward men which are the bond linking human society together, and yet become also the worship of God; for God in His Word commands and enunciates that this is true worship if they are performed because of God's command, as Isaiah says in 1:10 ff., and again in 54:13 ff. Samuel says [1 Sam. 15:22], "Obedience is better than sacrifices." Hosea 6:6 says, "I will have mercy rather than sacrifice." Christ says that the commandment to love our neighbor "is like the First Commandment" [Matt. 22:39], that is, He demands the required obedience in the same way that obedience to the First Commandment is necessary. These points must be noted in order that we may learn what the true worship of God is and that the works of all the commandments must be related to the first one, and that the purpose must be determined in each of the individual commandments so that they may be done principally in order to give obedience and honor to God. For the worship of God is the work commanded by God, which consists primarily in this, that obedience and honor be given to God and that, along with the confession or acknowledgment of Christ by faith, we please the Father for Christ's sake, just as Peter commands us to offer "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" [1 Peter 2:5].

The First Commandment

The First Commandment prescribes concerning the highest and most important work, that is, the true knowledge of God, and concerning the true and perfect obedience toward God in perfect fear, trust, and love of God. The two most important elements here are the knowledge of God and the true worship of God. The way of knowing Him is through His Word and testimony. For because God is invisible, it is necessary that there be a testimony about Him, through which He might be recognized and understood, with the result that the human mind is caught up with the workmanship of the world and thinks about God its Creator, but this knowledge, which also the gentiles and the Mohammedans hold, is not sufficient, since these thoughts are driven out of many people by the devil. But even when God is most closely present, yet doubt remains as to whether God the Creator is concerned, hears our prayers, whether He wants to be worshiped, and how. At this point there is need for a word and testimony from God. Therefore here is set forth the sure Word and testimony: "I am the Lord your God, who led you out of the land of Egypt," Ex. 20:2. Thus the human mind should establish that He is the God who has revealed Himself by this word given on Mount Sinai and who asserts that He is your God, that is, the One who is concerned about you, sees you, judges you, defends and punishes you.

The glorious liberation and defense of this people when they were led out of Egypt is an added testimony. Therefore, although God is invisible, yet the human mind knows that He is the true God who reveals Himself by His marvelous testimonies and shows how He wishes to be worshiped. Thus, in the beginning the Word was given to Adam in Paradise, and the whole nature of things, which was a testimony about God, was set before him. But afterwards, when he had fallen,

he needed comfort concerning the forgiveness of his sin. Therefore another Word was given, namely, the promise of grace; and signs were added by the use of burnt offerings. So also to us the Word of the Gospel has been given and a sure testimony, namely the crucifixion and resurrection of the Son of God. He shows us the Father, John 14:8 ff. When the Son is acknowledged, then we evoke the eternal Father who has revealed Himself in His Son, as it says in John 1:18, "No one has ever seen the Father. The Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." Likewise John 14:9, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." Matt. 11:27, "No one knows the Father except the Son and he to whom the Son reveals Him." Through Him the Father is pleased, and for His sake He hears our prayers. Christ Himself says in John 16:23, "Whatsoever you ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you." Therefore we have established that He is God, who has revealed Himself by the giving of His Son, sent to be a sacrifice and to be raised again in order that He might be our Mediator, Intercessor, Helper, and Savior. Likewise it is He who gave to His Son the Gospel of the remission of sins and life everlasting. This invocation, which recognizes the eternal and almighty God by trust in Christ through the Gospel that has been given to us, distinguishes the worship of the true church from the worship of all the gentiles. Therefore, as often as the human mind cries out to God, it should call upon the God who is the Father of our crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ and in faith meditate on the good news given through this Son: "Whatsoever you ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you," John 16:23. This method of knowing God Paul repeatedly commends to us, cf. 1 Cor. 1:21, "Because in the wisdom of God the world in its wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe." Likewise the doctrine of Christ the High Priest entering the Holy of Holies teaches the same thing. The remainder of mankind does not know the invisible God, but into the secret Holy of Holies the Son of God entered alone. Therefore we who are about to come near to God should recognize Him as our High Priest who leads us to the Father and carries our requests to Him, as it says in Heb. 4:16, "Having this high priest, let us come near to the throne of grace." Men must learn this way of knowing God in order that He may be properly worshiped.

Moreover, the worship commanded here is the knowledge of God, belief in His Word, true fear, true faith or trust, and true love. For He is requiring fear when He says, "I am the mighty God, jealous, visiting the iniquities . . . " Ex. 20:1 ff. Likewise, "You shall fear the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve," Deut. 6:13. He is requiring trust and love when He says, "I am your almighty God, who sees you, cares for you, defends you, and saves you," Ex. 20:1 ff. Again, ". . . Showing mercy to them that love Me," Ex. 20:6. And again, "You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart," Deut. 6:5. For these statements, wherever we read them, are explanations of the First Commandment.

Because this commandment requires perfect obedience, these words in Deut. 6:5 are a testimony, "You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, mind, and strength." Thus it requires fear, trust, and love for God above all things; and this is the case in order that these virtues are to be pure, sweet-smelling, and perfect without any mixture of sin and lust. But the corrupt nature of man in this life cannot produce this perfect obedience. Doubts concerning both the anger and mercy of God cling in his heart. No one fears God as he ought. No one is so on fire with love as he ought to be, and [we have] many corrupt lusts. Therefore Paul says, "The carnal mind is enmity against God," Rom. 8:7. Nor does our evil nature easily understand when we speak of "enmity against God." Thus this law always accuses and condemns all men in their corrupt nature, because they cannot produce perfect obedience.

Now someone will ask, Is it necessary that those who want to please God must obey the Law? I reply: The first beginnings of obedience cannot take place without the knowledge of Christ in the Gospel. For because the Law accuses and condemns all, and we acknowledge that we are guilty and full of stubborn opposition to this Law, therefore our hearts flee from God, do not love Him, and do not dare to ask good things from Him. But when the Gospel has been heard, when we understand that our sins have been remitted to us because of Christ and that we have been truly received into His grace and have been made His children, even though we are unworthy, then in the knowledge of the mercy of God we call upon Him, begin to submit ourselves to Him, to fear Him, to meditate on the promise of His mercy, and to love Him, not in a vain way but as our Father who truly cares for us and saves us, as He says, "I am your God" [Ex. 20:2]. Thus the beginning of keeping the commandments is the acknowledgment of Christ. Then, although obedience ought to increase, yet not even the regenerate ever satisfy the law, and yet the rest of their sins are overlooked for those who, as we shall point out under the proper locus, are reputed righteous for the sake of Christ our Mediator, as it is written, "Christ is the completion of the Law" [Rom. 10:4]. And since they are righteous by this imputation which is accomplished for the sake of the Son of God, their beginning obedience is pleasing to God, even if it is not perfect. The regenerate carry out the law by beginning to obey it and by believing that for the sake of Christ they are regarded as righteous and that for His sake the sins which still cling to them are pardoned.

Furthermore, it is helpful for the sake of teaching this doctrine to include all of the works of the First Commandment under two terms, fear and faith. For although love is of necessity joined to faith or trust in God's

mercy, yet the word "love" is less clear than the word "fear" or "faith." For it is necessary that we experience fear in our repentance and trust in our consolation.

I have summarized the works of the First Commandment as the knowledge of God, belief in His word, fear, faith, trust, and love of God. To these points I have added that we must show patience in the face of affliction, either when we are troubled by the unrighteous violence of tyrants or other evil men or when common calamities befall us: sickness, death, the loss of personal property, etc. In each of these difficulties God requires obedience of the heart. The work of the First Commandment is also the worship of God and the obedience of the church in every kind of affliction. Such was the obedience of Abel in his murder, the obedience of the martyrs in their torments, the obedience of Job, of David in his family tragedies. For concerning the first kind it is clearly written, "He who wishes to follow Me, let him take up his cross . . ." Matt. 16:24. Likewise it is necessary that we "be conformed to the image of His Son," Rom. 8:29. Again, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints," Ps. 116:15. Thus there are clear commandments concerning this obedience, and God wills to be feared more than tyrants. Further, He wills that we in these very punishments do not fall into despair in our sorrow nor think that we are forgotten by God, but rather cling to the comfort that God is lovingly inclined toward us and will direct the outcome.

In regard to the calamities that befall us it is written: "Judgment begins at the house of God," 1 Peter 4:17; therefore whether they are punishments or testings, God wills that the church be subjected to such afflictions because human nature by reason of the sin which clings in our flesh is subject to death, and many of the actual sins of the church, even of the saints, are punished. Thus God wills that the church be admonished by these troubles to repent, to render obedience, to practice faith, worship, and hope, and not to fall into despair or think that we are forgotten or cast off by God. Rather we should cling to the consolation that God is favorable toward us and will direct the final outcome. Here are pertinent the statements which command us to be obedient in our common calamities and be hopeful through faith: "Do not murmer," 1 Cor. 10:10, that is, do not be angry with God as if He were treating us cruelly or neglecting us. Likewise, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God," 1 Peter 5:6. Again, "A broken spirit is a sacrifice to God . . ." Ps. 51:17. "Commit your way unto the Lord, trust also in Him," Ps. 37:5. Again, "Offer the sacrifice of righteousness and put your trust in the Lord," Ps. 4:5.

See how many good works relate to this obedience which also at the same time pertain to the First Commandment. First, the very obedience of looking to God is of itself a good work, and in this precept it is commanded that God be feared more than tyrants. Likewise, the precept commands us to bear divinely imposed punishments, such as death and the like, as it is said, "Judgment begins at the house of God," 1 Peter 4:17, or "We are chastened by the Lord that we should not be condemned with the world," 1 Cor. 11:32. It is necessary to add faith to this obedience which determines that God does not neglect us, nor cast us off in our affliction, but even now is regarding you and is favorable toward you and will direct the outcome, as David believed when he was in exile. The faith and hope are works of the First Commandment. From all these things comes the virtue which is called patience, that is, the obedience which is given to God with a kind of tranquility of soul or an obedient will which comes from the comfort of our faith. All of these things Paul calls "peace," as in Phil. 4:7, "The peace of God which surpasses all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds," that is, there shall be in you such peace or tranquility of mind that you can sustain and strengthen your minds by the consolation of obedience to God and the comfort of faith and can bear adversities by keeping your eyes on the promise of God by which, when we see the marvelous goodness and mercy of God, we also love Him.

Antithesis

Now we should consider the stubborn resistance of the human race in opposition to the First Commandment, in order that we may acknowledge our frailty and to some extent learn to distinguish the kinds or degrees of sins against this precept.

The first kind is the sin of the Epicureans and academic philosophers who deny or doubt whether there is a God or whether He is concerned about human matters or whether the Word which the church has was given to us by God. For such is the great majority of mankind everywhere, who have completely banished from their minds every thought about God, who are filled with doubt and increase in it. Thus the greatest darkness followed the fall of our first parents; the wickedness of men later on confirmed the darkness, and the devil aids it also.

The second kind of sin against the First Commandment belongs to those who worship idols, that is, those who devise many gods and attribute different powers to them individually, as when the gentiles attribute divine honor, that is, invoke a creature or call upon dead saints. For this invocation attributes omnipotence to the creature or limits God to certain images, even though He does not will to be bound to anything without His Word. For it is evident that the world has always been full of idols and is still given to idolatry. Nor does this invoking of the saints and the worship of statues differ from the practices of the heathen.

The third kind belongs to magicians who make pacts with devils, the enemies of God, and those who consult magicians, and those who are given over to other superstitious observances to which powers are attributed without the ordinance of God. If some effects

do result from these practices, the devil is the author of them, and trust is placed in him. All these things are forbidden in Lev. 20:6, "The person who turns to mediums and wizards plays the harlot after them. I will turn My face against him and cut him off from the midst of his people."

Fourth, the Jews, philosophers, heretics, and Mohammedans all devise for themselves their own gods and are unwilling to acknowledge that He is God who reveals Himself in His Word through His Son Christ, since He wills to be known and worshiped only in this way. Therefore the Manichaeans violated the First Commandment when they created the notion that there were two gods, one good and one evil and both equally eternal. Likewise Paul of Samosata, who argued that in Christ there was only the human nature, just as Mohammedans irreverently believe. The Arians also broke this commandment in denying that the Son of God is of the substance of the Father. Likewise others who say that the Holy Spirit is only an emotion created in men.

Fifth, there are those who do not worship and call upon God through Christ the Mediator, but imagine other mediators such as the saints, Masses, satisfactions, and other works. Also those who say that we must remain in doubt about the grace of God.

Sixth, the deserters who have fallen away from the true doctrine of the Gospel because of fear or hatred, such as Judas and Julian the Apostate.

Seventh, those who have lost hope, such as Saul, and of necessity all people will fall into this state who do not know the Gospel of faith in Christ.

Eighth, those who refuse to learn the Gospel and are not aroused to hear or understand the teaching of Christ, even though the heavenly Father has commanded, "Hear Him," Matt. 17:5.

Ninth, the hypocrites, who even though they profess the truth and are not polluted by worship of idols, yet in their heart are without fear of God, without faith, and they love their pleasures or their treasures more than they love God, men such as Nabal, 1 Sam. 25:3 ff. This is the way the great majority of people in the church are, even when the church possesses the pure doctrine, as the parable of the sower teaches [Matt. 13:3 ff.].

Tenth, pride, that is, an admiration for and trust in one's own power, wisdom, or virtues, without the admission of our own weakness, without acknowledging our need of or praying for divine help, as was the case with Alexander, who after so many great things had been accomplished, believed that this beautiful empire of his had come into being by his own decision and military might and took great delight in his own wisdom and his own courage, and began to despise and oppress his subordinates and did not recognize that these great achievements had been made by the help of God, who took the rule away from the Persians that He might punish them, just as afterwards Alexander was reduced to nothing and punished. The same is recorded of Nebuchadnezzar who, when he was chastened for his arrogance, repented, Dan. 4:3 ff. Sennacharib in the same way was puffed up in his own self confidence and did not repent and was killed, 2 Kings 18–19. History shows that many men of heroic proportions were finally brought low by tragic circumstances. This happens because they sin in their self-admiration and trust in their own talents without recognizing their human frailty and without acknowledging and seeking divine aid. They often create dangerous situations and even evil ones out of their own desires, because of confidence in their own power, as Pompey did. Thus they add other vices—love of wealth, despising and oppressing other people, as Alexander did when in his false security he became intoxicated and killed his most deserving generals and thus brought down punishments upon himself. Poetry also refers to this same kind of thing in the case of Ajax, whom Sophocles describes as being punished with madness because, when his father Telamon had said to him in his departure that he should fight with all his might but seek his victory from God, Ajax replied that even a coward could be victorious with the help of God, but that he would win without him. From examples of this kind we can easily understand why heroic men are finally destroyed by evil circumstances. It is written of this pride and self-confidence, "Everyone who is proud in heart before men is an abomination before the Lord," Prov. 16:5. Although this evil can more clearly be seen in heroic people, yet all are subject to the disease. The trust of many people leans more heavily on riches, friends, and their own industry than on God. We must learn to recognize this disease in order that we may amend ourselves and place our trust truly in God, as David cried, "Look upon me and be merciful to me, for I am desolate and afflicted," Ps. 25:16. Again he says, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up," Ps. 27:10.

Here we must also mention those hypocrites who put their trust in their own righteousness before God, as the Pharisees in Luke 18:10 ff. Upon such people falls the guilt of many sins, because they do not recognize their own weakness, they do not recognize that in the eyes of God they are worthy of punishment because they have a false confidence and do not call upon God through Christ the Mediator. Indeed, they put their own works forward in the place of the Mediator's. I have described their attributes above under the fifth degree.

Eleventh, unwillingness to suffer, which in the proper sense of the word is a violation of the First Commandment because our will refuses to be obedient to God in our punishments. Sometimes it even becomes angry at God as being a harsh master or an unjust judge, an emotion against which Scripture often cautions us, for example, "Be angry and do not sin" [Eph. 4:26], that is, rule over your sorrow and bend your mind

so that you may willingly be obedient to God in your anguish, as has been said in Ps. 4:4.

I have gathered together the kinds of sins which in themselves are violations of the First Commandment, which can easily be recognized and evaluated. Because the Decalogue is the sum of the teaching of all virtues, we should distribute also these virtues among the individual commandments. To the first pertains the virtue sometimes called "piety," sometimes "religion," but it is more easily understood as fear of God, faith or trust, love of God. Of necessity this virtue called piety includes these aspects. Here we consider also the willingness to suffer. Another name for piety is almost equivalent to the term "universal righteousness," if we define it as that obedience which is given to God in all His commandments, as we shall later discuss, to this end, that we humble ourselves before God and do all our works for Him. Therefore we shall discuss also that virtue called "universal righteousness."

The Second Commandment

Under the First Commandment we have spoken regarding the desires of the heart toward God, which are the highest and innermost worship, because God requires obedience from the heart and not something pretended, in keeping with the passage, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart," Deut. 6:5, or "The true worshipers are those who worship the Father in spirit and in truth," John 4:24. Now we move on to a discussion of the Second Commandment from the standpoint of its outward observance. For God wills that we know Him and call upon Him with our voice. Just as He has revealed Himself through the Word, so He wills that this Word be proclaimed. Therefore, after He has spoken about the desires of the heart, He then gives a command concerning that proclamation in which the name of God and the Word of God sounds forth.

"You Shall Not Take the Name of God in Vain"

Under the First Commandment we have placed affirmative and negative statements: "I am the Lord your God who led you out of the land of Egypt." This is the affirmative, to which are added also other affirmative statements: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart," Deut. 6:5. Likewise, "You shall fear the Lord your God," Deut. 6:13. When we have established the affirmative aspects, then we must add the negative statements, always bearing in mind that under the First Commandment the affirmative is expressed first. Here in the Second Commandment God forbids the misuse of His name, and wills that it be proclaimed and made known: "I am the Lord your God," Ex. 20:2. There are, therefore, true uses for the name of God: true preaching, true invocation, the giving of thanks, and confession. We should understand here that these four kinds of work are commanded, and at this place we should bring in the affirmative passages regarding these works. For example, "Go and teach all nations," Matt. 28:19; "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you, and you will glorify Me," that is, give Me thanks, Ps. 50:15; "With the heart it is believed unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," Rom. 10:10. These statements very properly give command concerning things of this kind. Relative to invocation also is the matter of taking an oath. For in swearing, a person calls upon God to be a witness of his will that he does not want to lie, and he prays that God will take vengeance and punish him if he lies, and he subjects himself to this punishment. From this we can understand how great a bond an oath is. A person calls upon God to pour out His wrath upon him if he is lying. What more terrible thing can a man bring down upon himself, or how can he bind a greater punishment upon himself! Therefore the final outcome is that this obligation is sanctified and confirmed by a divine oath in keeping with this passage, "God will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain," Ex. 20:7. Also in this life horrible punishments come to perjurers.

How Can This Commandment Be Carried Out?

As we have said above, the works of the First Commandment cannot be carried out without the knowledge of the Son of God and faith. We must understand the same thing regarding this commandment. It is thoroughly evident that there can be no invocation unless there be knowledge of Christ the Mediator, and the same applies to the giving of thanks. Again it is certainly necessary in regard to the ministry that the Gospel of the Son of God be taught. Finally, as we have said above, it is necessary first that we lay hold on the reconciliation given to us through the Son of God, but after this to determine to make a beginning of obedience. The same must be understood regarding the other commandments. The works of the other commandments are thus pleasing to God and become the worship of God when the works of the First Commandment precede, namely fear and faith. Thus [the work of] the rest of the commandments become sacrifices of praise and are pleasing to God, but this is particularly true in the case of the Second Commandment. As it has been written especially about this kind of obedience, "I will sacrifice to You the sacrifice of praise, and I will call upon the name of the Lord," Ps. 116:17.

Sins against the Second Commandment

The antithesis is the same as for the preceding commandment, since the sins of the heart, as we have reviewed them above, are made known. In conflict with this commandment are: epicurean words; words of outward godless worship; godless invocation of demons, idols, the dead; false doctrine, perjury, unjust condemnations; the words of those who proclaim arrogance and impudence as in the case of Ajax, who said that

he could conquer even without God. Likewise the very common evil of attaching the name of God, religion, and the Gospel to sinful desires, ambitions, greed, lust, and hatred conflicts with the Second Commandment. The pope under the title of "minister" or "servant" seeks power and starts unjust wars. He has set up idols and laid snares for catching immeasurable amounts of money and other things. Now this generation of ours under the title of the "Gospel" often covers up the avarice of private citizens. Here pertain also all the snares which either wound the simple or weaken faith or turn the wills of some people away from the Gospel.

Frightful threats have been added to this precept; they speak of physical punishments and also refer to eternal wrath, because the Law does not announce the remission of sins, but in the Gospel God's eternal wrath is declared against those who do not repent: "Depart from Me, you wicked people, into everlasting fire," Matt. 25:41. For what is said here regarding the punishments "unto the third and fourth generation of those who hate" God, Ex. 20:5, should be understood in the physical sense. Just as penalties were added to previous generations, so we should understand that they have also been added to succeeding generations, and in Deut. 27:15 ff. curses are added to all the commandments. Nor should we doubt that the calamities of this world are punishments for the sins of the whole race, as it says in Ps. 39:11, "Because of iniquity You have corrected the sons of men."

The Third Commandment

In the First Commandment are taught the inner works of the mind, will, and heart toward God; in the Second, the outward profession; in the Third Commandment is taught the precept regarding the divinely instituted ceremonies. We must understand the purpose of these. Ceremonies were given for the service of teaching and serves this function. Thus the precept regarding the Sabbath speaks principally of the service of teaching and administering the divinely instituted ceremonies or rites. Thus the text is not speaking only in a general way but specifically of sanctification. The commandment intends that on that holy day good works are to take place, that is, properly those things which God has commanded, that the people are to be taught and the divinely established rites be observed. For this purpose a certain day was set aside. This principal point in the commandment pertains to all men and to all times, because it is natural law. But in regard to the observance of the seventh day, it is obvious that after the Levitical ceremonies were abrogated, this observance has also been changed, as Col. 2:14 ff. clearly teaches. Thus it is correct to say that in the Third Commandment there are two parts, one a natural, moral, or general law, and the other part is the ceremonial which applied properly to the people of Israel specifically with reference to the seventh day. Of the first part it is correct to say that as a natural or general law it is in effect for all time and cannot be abrogated, that is, it is a commandment for the preservation of the public ministry, so that there be a day on which the people may be taught and the divinely instituted rites observed. But the specific reference to the Jews by name and the specific reference to the seventh day have been abrogated.

Therefore we should learn with certainty that here is commanded the preservation of the public ministry and the rites which God has instituted, because God wills to preserve them in order that His church may remain and be planted, as it says in Eph. 4:11 ff.,"He gave some apostles, some prophets, some pastors, some teachers, that the body of Christ may be built . . . that we be not tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of teaching," that is, He gave a sure word to be spread among people through the prophets and apostles, with certain witnesses added. He established the public ministry by which this Word is preached, so that we might have the sure teaching about God and not devise new religions and new worship, as the gentiles do. Each person in his own place ought to love and respect this gift of God and support it, as Christ says, "He who hears you hears Me and he who despises you despises Me," Luke 10:16. The prophets deplored the desolation of the Sabbath (2 Chron. 36:21, cf. Jer. 27:2) and lamented that the ministry of teaching had been abolished. Therefore the works demanded by this commandment and the reverent performance of this ministry are: to hear those who teach correctly and use the sacrament reverently and to support their use also by Christian example and frequent attendance; to obey those who teach correctly and honor and support them and defend true teachers and to aid with zealous works the needs of the church. I do not require any allegory for this commandment but rather give the proper and particular meaning. For it is no easy and insignificant task to preserve the divinely established ministry.

The sins against this commandment are these: to omit or abolish the work of correct teaching, to teach falsely, to corrupt the sacred rites, never or rarely to attend public services in the congregation where the churches are correctly taught; to lead others away from the public ministry which is not corrupted by ungodliness, as when the Donatists led their congregations out. Or not to obey the ministry of pure teaching, to carry on useless works, that is, works which hinder religious services on days set aside for public worship, or to spend those days in games and gormandizing or other vices, or to despise and bring humiliation on godly pastors, or being unwilling to give them financial support and to defend them, or to be unwilling to cover their faults if they are sound in doctrine, as when Ham ridiculed his naked father; or not to give eager support to the church.

Furthermore, as we have said above, the First Commandment must be included in all the others, for,

since they are the commandments of God, He must be recognized as their author and obedience must be given Him. Therefore, the fear of God and trust in God are the life of the other commandments and must be present in all of the works of all the remaining commandments. Thus, in order that the works of this precept may be accomplished, we must add the recognition of the Son of God, so that we can in faith and worship of God obey this command. Likewise, since this precept speaks of the ministry and the rites, it has to include the Gospel because the ministry of the Law is only the ministry of death, but the Gospel proclaims the remission of sins and life everlasting for the sake of the Son of God. Likewise, the divinely established ceremonies are a type of Christ. Thus, the Jews cannot correctly perform the works of this commandment without the true knowledge of Christ, and the monks and those who sacrifice the mass (because the doctrine of faith, true worship and true prayer is unknown among them) pile up many sins in their own ceremonies. They wrongly think that the works of human traditions are worship. They pervert the Lord's Supper in many ways and actually bring the rites themselves into question by their corruptions. These errors are in conflict with this commandment and they defile the Sabbath.

The titles for the good works which pertain to the First Commandment also apply to the Second and Third.

The Second Table

Even if only civil life is established in this table, yet it is necessary that the human mind understand that here is set forth the best form of life for man in his society. In the first place, government is established as a divine institution and obedience is commanded. In the second place, peace is protected: "Thou shalt not kill." Marriage is protected: "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Ownership of property is protected: "Thou shalt not steal." Later on courts of justice were established and the truth was verified by oaths in the case of contracts and covenants: "Thou shalt not bear false witness." These are all sources for the laws of human society. We should know, to be sure, that life in society is taught to us, but two other points have been added. First, we must remember that God is the Maker both of these laws and of civil life. Thus we must know that we must be obedient for the sake of God, and we should include the First Commandment in all things in order that fear and respect for God and faith in Him may govern our obedience in all areas. Second, we should understand not only the outward works of the precept but also the inner obedience. Thus the nature of man must be ordered so that it does not have inclinations, desires, and works which run counter to this order in which it has been established, which is also set forth and commanded in the Law.

The opposition and confusion in the order in man's nature is especially apparent in this life of man in society. The arrogance in government, the multitude of unjust killings, the unjust wars, the hatred and the envy! Uncontrolled lusts, improper desires, the ravings of the demented are beyond calculation. Thievery is clearly beyond measure in illegal business practices, in usury, and the like. Who works without greed? Who is content with what he has? Who piously and properly handles his property? Finally, everyone deplores double-talk and lying in treaties, contracts, and courts of justice. In these examples we can clearly see the confusion in the order established by God. Thus we must learn that His law is speaking not only about external actions, but also is accusing the whole stubborn opposition of human nature and the confusion of His order, both internal and external. Thus were added at the end of the commandments the precepts regarding coveting, which speak directly to our inner opposition.

Therefore let us now run through the rest of the commandments, which even though they pertain to civil matters, you must know were first given by God in order that we might live in this societal life in which He wills to be known; in which He wills to develop our faith and worship in the midst of our common perils and labors; in which He wills that love be demonstrated toward our fellow men, and that individuals be subject to the common service for His sake; in which He wills that the light of our confession shine forth, so that others may be taught and invited to know and fear God, as it is written, "Let your light shine before men . . . ," Matt. 5:16. He does not will that Samuel or David lie hidden in solitude and spend their time in some cave performing secret ceremonies, but He wills that they live in the midst of the floods and storms of governing and there spread the divinely given teaching. He wills that they exercise their faith in the midst of dangers and teach others; and that they be known as witnesses of the doctrine which God shows through them. He wills that they be subject to the common service for the sake of the obedience they owe to God. Thus, the Law treats all alike, setting forth the duties in which each individual serves other individuals, when they carry out their own duties, since we are all members of one body, in mutual love, joined together in our mutual duties, in order to obey God. Therefore let us learn here to be ruled so that we may bear the common burdens of our entire life and carry out our common service, that we may contribute our works and remember that we have been made by God for their life in human society. For the first law does not say: seek solitude, or your pleasure, or take your ease, but it says, "Honor your father and your mother, respect your government, and render obedience." Therefore we should learn that the works of the Second Table are truly the worship of God, as this worship has been described above, that is, when our works are guided by the fear of God and by faith. Thus it is common in the prophets, when a choice must be made, that civil obligations should be placed ahead of ceremonies. Is.

1:17 says, "Defend the orphan . . . "; Is. 58:7, "Divide your bread with the hungry." Cf. also Hosea 6 and Zechariah 7; be just in your judgment. Christ adorns these duties in the most beautiful way when He tells us that loving our neighbor is like the First Commandment, that is, God demands obedience in both categories at the same time, and that both kinds of obedience are the worship of God.

The Fourth Commandment

The Fourth Commandment is established at the first level of authority, namely our parents, and thus ought to be the rule for other forms of governance, as in Romans 13. Likewise the highest degree of obedience is commanded, namely honor. Honor has three aspects: The first is the recognition of God, who is the author of the laws for human society both in marriage and in the state. In these ordinances we see the wisdom of God, His goodness toward us, His righteousness, His anger against wrongdoers, and His defense of the innocent. Therefore honoring our parents is recognizing that this human state is a divine work, a testimony to God's providence, beneficial for the human race, good and honorable; loving this ordinance for the sake of God and the common good; and seeking with godly prayers that He would preserve this state.

The second involves external obedience, so that we may observe our common duties in society and not destroy them.

The third involves equity by which in the great weakness of mankind we pardon certain wrongs in our government and restore or repair them with our sense of fairness, gentleness, and concern, and yet in such a way that we do not act contrary to the commandments of God.

The substance of the matter must be distinguished from the personalities. This threefold concept of honor which I have mentioned is always owed to those in authority, that is to the estate of matrimony and to civil government, and committed and bound to the honored and respected laws which God has grafted into the minds of men, and to other just laws. Thus the patriarchs, the prophets, Christ, and the apostles always respected matrimony and the civil order as being the works and benefits of God, just as they considered changes in movements and times and the many miraculous outcomes of events in civil life, and considered them as being the concern of God toward the human race. In the meantime, however, they made a distinction between the things themselves from the persons and from the works of the devil who furiously tries to ruin, overturn and disrupt the greater works of God. Thus Paul loved and obeyed the government, that is, the laws of the Roman empire, but he did not love Caligula and Nero. Indeed, he execrated them as instruments of the devil, cursed by God, by whose crimes the entire nature of things appeared to be contaminated. This distinction between the subjects themselves and the personalities involved must be kept in mind, so that the works of God can be kept separate from the works of the devil. He who can distinguish between the matters themselves and the personalities will love and revere his government and its laws more, as he looks at the great confusion of rulers which comes from the devil and his agents. For what can be imagined as more monstrous, more shameful, and more abominable than the tyrants of all ages, and how few kindly rulers there have been in any age! We must understand and lament these evils and pray God that He Himself will correct and preserve our governments. Nor are iniquities to be excused or defended under the pretext of godly work; nor are the manifest and horrible injuries, impieties, and indescribable lusts of tyrants to be tolerated on the ground of the dignity of their rank, when there is no end to their raging, but rather other elements of government, to whom God has given the sword, also are doing the right thing when they remove monsters like Caligula and Nero from the power of governing. As the most honorable Trajan said to his master of the horse when he was giving him his sword, "Use this sword to support me, if I rule justly; but if I rule unjustly, use it against me."

If rulers are faithful, that is, if they try at least to some degree to carry out their duties and act as justly as possible, and are mindful of failing, then we must forgive them and either overlook or correct their mistakes. Such men were David, Solomon, and Jehoshaphat, who although they were excellent rulers, also had their lapses, which are described in Scripture in order that we might be warned that governing is a most difficult and dangerous activity. For the devil, since he is a murderer, causes the destruction of statesmen and either overturns their governments or has his henchmen among their people, as he did in the case of Saul, whom he totally destroyed, although Saul at the beginning had done some fine and useful things. David fell into some traps from which he was barely extricated. Then the devil incited Absalom, whose crime brought immeasurable ruin. The devil stirs up the civic realm and the nature of man in itself is weak both in the case of rulers and their people. Both, by nature, love license and hate laws and the iron fetters of discipline. That among the great traps of the devil and the manifold weakness of men even a modicum of stability remains is a great and remarkable gift of God, as Solomon clearly says, "That the eye sees and the ear hears, the Lord has done both," Prov. 20:12, that is, that a ruler rules wisely and that obedience is the response of his subjects each in their station, this is the work of God and He bestows it through faithful rulers, some of whom pass it on to others. No human wisdom, watchfulness, or power is equal to these great tasks. Thus Paul says in 2 Cor. 3:5, "Our sufficiency is from God; not that we are able of ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves." But in the people themselves faithfulness is required, that is, a desire to do the right

things, 1 Cor. 4:2, "But this is required in stewards that they be faithful." Therefore, when the state of political affairs is reasonably good, we should understand that it is a blessing of God which He imparts to others through His faithful servants and we should obey God through the authority of our rulers.

Furthermore, we should give honor to these rulers for their faithfulness and the heavy labors which accompany all governance, that is, we should confess that they are aided by God and are the instruments through which God supplies good things to us; we should love them and be subject to them. We ought to express gratitude to them for their hard work and overlook their failures, as long as it is not contrary to the commandments of God. This equity is a great and difficult virtue. I have briefly noted the things included under the word "honor," and we must carefully consider these things. I have also spoken of the distinction between the concept itself and the people involved.

Furthermore, this precept deals with the interrelationships between the rulers and the ruled. The duties of the rulers are indicated in such terms as "father" and "mother." Likewise in the entire Decalogue, which is the complete statement regarding governance, are included all the virtues and the duties of a good father and a good ruler. Xenophon says it correctly: "A good prince differs in no way from a good father." The first concern of a good ruler deals with the First Table, that is, he is anxious that the churches teach correctly. A father is concerned that his children are taught about God. In the second place, he must be just and strong in his defense of his people; he must be chaste, helpful in aiding the good, he must have zeal, and a strong hatred for wickedness; he must be honest in his words and actions, open, not given to suspicion, etc. He must be diligent in using his resources so that there is no lack of necessities. Then, as I have said, the entire Decalogue is a model for governance, and if a ruler will have the attitude of a father, he will have a desire and the ability to do these things.

In turn, the subject must give honor to his ruler, that is, he must recognize that government is a work of God, he should obey for the sake of God and he overlooks some of the errors of his ruler. Here pertain such virtues as universal justice, which is legitimate obedience to a magistrate. There must likewise be a concern about our calling. Likewise, reasonableness in overlooking and correcting the errors of our rulers so that the public peace is not disturbed. But vices which we oppose and sins are more easily seen, so that there is a stubbornness against rulers, which is called disobedience and is a universal unrighteousness, or sedition, neglect of the duties of one's calling, that is, injecting oneself into the responsibilities of others. Both rulers and ruled often fall into this kind of sin. Thus Peter in 1 Peter 4:15 forbids meddling in the government of someone else.

Besides, just as we have said above in the case of governments that we must distinguish between the subject itself and the personalities, so also we must observe a distinction in the kinds of government. In the case of many kingdoms there was particular concern for the defense of honorable civil society, even if religion was unknown. But in the kingdom of the Antichrist there are continuing and particular laws regarding the new religion which [it is said] brings shame to Christ and is condemned by God, and the principal purpose of his kingdom is to destroy the name of Christ, and his kingdom itself is established on the pretext that to extirpate the name and doctrine of Christ is for the glory of God. Such also is the kingdom of Mohammed. The very law of Mohammed is in manifest contempt of Christ. In the second place, it is a law of violence, in which he commands that those who believe that Christ is the Son of God are to be killed, and he commands his followers to propagate his errors by the sword. These kingdoms were predicted in Daniel 7 in connection with the little horn, v. 8 ff., "Who speaks words against God and crushes His saints," v. 25. In the third place, the law of Mohammed allows manifold shameful lusts. In fact, there is no real marriage among Mohammedans, because they permit marriage, divorce, and the receiving of divorcés, according to their private decisions, without cause; and by law they allow shameful perversions on account of which God destroyed Sodom and many other cities. In this kingdom the law is not from God but from the ragings of the devil which God permits to continue until the last time, in order that He may punish the world. By the same token, as sins increased from the very beginning, slavery increased, and also the harshness and confusion of rulers. Thus the difference between the rest of the kingdoms and the rule of Mohammed must be noted. Daniel was able to be a magistrate in the kingdom of Babylon. The Jews could serve in Alexander's army. Christians could fight under the Roman emperors, such as when under the believing Marcus Antoninus a great victory was won by Christian soldiers in Pannonia, because the purpose of the military action was the establishment of good government. But it is not right to serve under the Turks, whose purpose is not good political order but the strengthening and spreading of the law they profess. It is permitted for Christians to suffer slavery under them, but not to enter military service with the Turks, because the text clearly says, "He shall crush the saints of God," Dan. 7:25.

The Fifth Commandment: "You Shall Not Kill"

This commandment forbids not only external injuries to the body and private outward revenge, but also hatred in the heart, evil intention, jealousy, and hidden desire for revenge. Christ clearly explains this commandment in Matt. 5:21 ff. On the contrary, it demands benevolence toward all men, mercy, concern, kindness which is opposed to all evil intention; it demands gen-

tleness, long-suffering, equity which forgives something out of a higher law for the sake of probable causes, that is, that those who can be restored should be called back to the right way. Likewise, the commandment demands that public disagreements should not arise out of private discord. For we know that the strong command regarding private offenses is, "Forgive and it shall be forgiven you." Again, revenge is not a matter of one's own private attack, but God demands that it be left to Him and He sets boundaries for it.Therefore He says, "Vengeance is mine," Rom. 12:19. For it is evident what great commotions the desire for personal revenge often arouses. Thus we should learn what vengeance God prescribes and how we are to obey the divine mandate.

Here we must also add that the government official has a divine mandate to take legimate vengeance. The duty of an official pertains to this statement: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay"—I will punish, either by My own hand or by permission or by the lawful office of the magistrate. For God has established powers and governments, He retains and changes them, as Daniel says in 2:37. God transfers and establishes the powers of government. Therefore lawful punishments are divine vengeance by which the magistrate chastises murderers, adulterers, perjurers, and idlers who have been condemned by the courts. To the office of ruler also pertains the matter of just wars, as when Constantine repressed the savagry of Licinius by force of arms. But just as war is the highest degree of political power, so also it is the most abused, and just and lawful wars are very rare. The devil, since he is a murderer and opposed to good political order and discipline, often stirs up great wars on the most flimsy pretexts, with the minds of men on both sides enflamed by sinful desires. God tolerates these villainies in order that the crimes of both parties may be punished. Just as the Peloponnesian War, which was the most destructive war of all Greece, was stirred up by the most insignificant causes, by a quarrel over the destruction of a certain grove which was considered sacred for some heathen rites and which Pericles had burned down because he was offended at things they had said against Aspasia. Nor is the highest law, especially in an insignificant case, a sufficiently just cause for initiating war, as it is said: Often the highest law is the highest injury. But let us employ equity which, even if offense has been given, is more concerned to bring peace than to destroy the innocent and bring immeasurable harm to the churches and the nation because of the errors of the few. Rulers should know that wars must be divine punishment and not serve human greed or rash anger. As Abigail says to David in 1 Sam. 25:28, "Because you are fighting the battles of the Lord, evil shall not be found in you."

The Sixth Commandment: "You Shall Not Commit Adultery"

There is a great confusion among all people as to what God has actually prohibited in this commandment. Christ adds an explanation in Matthew 5 which shows that not only are outward sins prohibited but also our depraved lusts and wandering and erring desires which are against this commandment. As we have said above, with the prohibitions are included also certain affirmative concepts such as the sanctifying and strengthening of lawful wedlock, which is protected under this commandment and which gives approval to marriage in the common sense of that term. On the contrary, it condemns all cohabitation outside of legitimate marriage and sets forth penalties in this life and eternal torments after this life. As it says in Heb. 13:4, "God will punish fornicators and adulterers." Likewise Eph. 5:5, "No fornicator or unclean man has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God . . . because of these things comes the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." It says that marriage is protected by these laws because even when the world does not punish adultery or other lusts, yet God punishes them and does not allow His commands to be taken lightly, as the examples of all ages show, even those which are not put in writing. But God has willed that certain things be written so that we may be cautioned regarding the rule that God is angry at all impurities and He either severely chastises or completely destroys those who do not respect [this commandment], as the Sodomites were destroyed. Not only were those five cities destroyed for this reason, but the evil desires of every nation gave occasion for the destruction of many others, as happened to the Greek cities Thebes, Athens and Sparta. Not only was Troy punished because of adultery, but many kings perished in tragic accidents because of their lusts, as in the case of the king of Egypt, Clytemnestra, nearly all the kings of Macedonia, Archelaus, Philip, Alexander, Demetrius, Ptolemy, and most of the Caesars. Often also in great wars kingdoms were changed because of this, so that almost the entire tribe of Benjamin was wiped out over the rape of the Levite's wife [Judges 19–20]. We should study these examples, apply them to ourselves as warnings from God, and resolve to be obedient to this precept and to fight against the flames of illicit desire. In obedience to this commandment are required virtues such as modesty, chastity, continence, a sense of shame, temperance, and sobriety. For without temperance no person can protect chastity.

The Seventh Commandment: "You Shall Not Steal"

Here we must assert the affirmative aspects of this commandment, for the distinction of ownership is sanctified by God, a distinction which the very word of the commandment asserts has been ordained by God. Because He forbids theft, He thereby wills that individuals should possess their own property. By this testimony are refuted the ravings of fanatical men who contend under the great and dangerous error that in the Gospel the holding of private property has been

abolished. In the second place, the prohibitory aspect of the precept must be kept in mind also, lest we covet the property of others. Because the arrangement has been divinely established that men among themselves in the natural performance of their duties should demonstrate their obedience toward God and honorably carry out their duties, God also punishes inequity in the performance of these relationships, not only with the punishments of magistrates but also with other disasters, as Isaiah says in 33:1, "Woe to you who despoil . . . for you will be despoiled." Deut. 25:15, "You shall have an honest measure . . . that your days may be prolonged." And experience proves the well-known rule: "Divide dishonestly and your goods will dishonestly disappear." This commandment demands many virtues which are in conflict with greed, jealousy, and wastefulness, such as uprightness in our business affairs, generosity, industriousness, and thrift. Thus the lazy and wasteful are all thieves, for unless they take from someone else they cannot sustain their laziness and costly habits.

The Eighth Commandment: "You Shall Not Bear False Witness"

This Law protects judgments and treaties and contains the most beautiful of all virtues, truth, the value of which is most widely evident in teaching, in legal judgments, in treaties or contracts, and in our daily life. For all corruptions of doctrine which take place through fraud or the pride of human reason are violations of this commandment, as well as all spoken slanders, verbal game-playing, falsifications regarding human activities, all sophistries, all statements made either out of hypocrisy or are insinuated in some other manner and do not clearly demonstrate what the person believes or what his nature really is. These things which are manifest in our daily life must be carefully considered, so that we truly and earnestly learn to hate all sophistry and double-talk.

The Ninth and Tenth Commandments

The Ninth and Tenth Commandments add an explanation in order that by the law of God we may know not only regarding the outward works of a particular commandment, but also that the evil which clings in the depraved nature of man, which they call concupiscence, is also under accusation and condemnation. For not only does the Law here condemn these wicked desires to which we give consent, as they call it, but it also condemns this wicked inclination itself which is a kind of continual turning away from God and a stubbornness which is in conflict with the law of God and which produces an infinite confusion of desires, even if consent is not always given. Concerning this constant evil Paul says in Rom. 8:7, "the mind of the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law and it cannot do so." Nor should this hostility toward God be regarded as a trifling evil, for it includes many troublesome qualities, such as doubt concerning God, turning away from Him, and raging against Him when we are punished. This hostility also includes innumerable vagrant and erring desires and feelings which are against the law of God, such as confidence in our own wisdom or powers, contempt for other people, jealousy, ambition, avarice, the flames of lust, desire for revenge. All of these concepts Paul includes under the term "hostility," in which we must also understand guilt. These qualities are in conflict with God, and God in turn is angry at these evils, even though for the sake of His Son He overlooks them in the believers. What Paul here calls hostility toward God, in other places he calls "concupiscence," which describes the corrupt inclination and depravity of all our desires. From this it becomes clear that no man who is born in this state of corruption fulfills the law of God, because of this wicked concupiscence, which Paul in Romans 7 testifies is sin and which remains in our mortal nature. Later on, in ch. 8 he calls it enmity against God and adds that it cannot be made subject to the law of God, and for this reason it is condemned in the Decalogue. At this point we must give this warning in order that the greatness of God's grace may be seen and the doctrine of faith can be understood.

Furthermore we must also add this: Although in the individual commandments mention is not made of rewards and punishments, yet we must understand that the promises and threats do pertain to the individual precepts and are repeated over and over again. The summary of the promises is expressed in these words, "He who does these things shall live in them," Lev. 18:5. The summary of the threats is, "Cursed is he who does not continue in all the things which are written in the Law," Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10. But we must understand that all the promises of the Law are conditional, that is, they require the condition that a person does nothing against the Law. But since the Law always accuses us, these promises would be vain unless we learn from the Gospel how we are to be accounted righteous and how our incipient obedience to the Law is pleasing to God. The promises attached to the Law are accounted to the righteous by faith for the sake of Christ, because God has accepted this obedience. Therefore He gives both temporal and spiritual rewards in keeping with this statement: "Give and it shall be given to you," Luke 6:38. Likewise, Ps. 33:19, " . . . to deliver their soul from death and to nourish them in famine." Later on we must speak fully concerning the difference between Law and Gospel and between the promises attached to the Law and those which belong to the Gospel. Also remember this, that the social or political order is truly a work of God, just as much as the order of the movement of the heavenly bodies, and therefore God regularly is presenting both His promises and His threats in the area of civil justice among men. Outward heinous crimes are threatened with clear punishments, even if the public officers fail to do their duty.

Even if murderers escape from the hands of the magistrate, yet they are still in a miraculous way brought to their punishment. Even if the civil law fails to punish perjurers, adulterers, or those corrupted by the lusts of incest, yet history and our daily experience bear witness that they are weighed down by all kinds of misfortunes. The Law is witness that these things have happened by God's intervention, as it says in Ex. 20:7, "The Lord will not hold him guiltless." Again, Heb. 13:4, "God will judge fornicators and adulterers." On the other hand, God aids upright rulers, as the good order and freedom from wars in their nations constantly demonstrate. Therefore the material promise is added to the Fourth Commandment, which deals with man in society, " . . . that you may live long on the earth."

Natural Law

As light has been set before our eyes by God, likewise certain knowledge has been implanted in the minds of men by which they understand and evaluate many things. The philosophers call this light the knowledge of the first principles, which they also call common notions or preconceptions.In popular speech a distinction is made: one category consists of principles visible to observation, such as the knowledge of numbers, order, logical syllogism, the principles of geometry, and physics. They grant that all of these are definite and the sources of the most useful things in this life. For what kind of life would we have without numbers or order? The second category consists of principles which relate to our actions, such as the natural difference between things which are honorable and those which are base. The matter of obedience to God comes under this category. To be sure, these principles governing our conduct ought to be as clear to us as the knowledge of numbers, and yet because of our original fall, a certain darkness has come over us and the human heart has conflicting desires over against the distinction between the upright and the immoral. For this reason men do not give their unequivocal assent to such areas of knowledge as the following: We must obey God, adultery must be shunned, contracts must be kept, in distinction to the fact that two times four is eight. The knowledge of the Law remains, but our assent to it is weak because of the stubbornness of our heart. This knowledge is a testimony that we have had our origin in God and that we owe obedience to Him and that He accuses our disobedience. But our hesitancy and stubbornness are clear signs that the nature of man is divided. The fact that we die points to the same thing, as well as the countless calamities which befall the human race and man's many incredibly evil actions. Paul is dealing with this in Rom. 1:18 when he says that men "suppress the truth in unrighteousness," that is, that even though the knowledge of the truth has been strongly impressed upon men that there is one God who is the eternal mind, the creator and preserver of things, who is wise, good, just, etc., and that this God is to be obeyed in keeping with the difference between honorable and evil things, yet this knowledge of the truth is suppressed and rejected in unrighteousness, that is, it is held captive and does not have the rule, but rather unrighteousness rules in opposition to this knowledge, by turning away man's will from God, by contempt for Him, by confidence in human abilities, and finally by various desires which conflict with the light which has been divinely kindled within our minds. Thus our assent is weak and—

> "The charioteer is carried along by the horses and does not heed the direction of the chariot." [1]

Thus the philosophers (when they saw that the assent of man was very weak and that men were carried away with great force to different pleasures) asked whether what was right and what was wrong were to be determined by nature or merely by human opinion.To have doubt on such a matter is shameful and disgraceful, just as if one were to ask whether two times four is eight is a matter of nature or merely an accident. The divine light in the minds of men must not be extinguished; rather, the mind must be stirred up and strengthened in order that it may recognize the first principles of action and embrace them and to determine that the immutable decrees of God are just as sure and certain as the visible principles. This is what Paul is stressing in Rom. 1:19 when he says, "God has shown it to them"; and again in Rom. 2:15, when he says, "The work of the Law was written in their hearts." He calls this knowledge the divine decree or judgment, Rom. 1:32, " . . . who though they knew God's judgment. . . ." Therefore the correct definition of the law of nature is this: The law of nature is the knowledge of the divine law which has been grafted into the nature of man. For this reason man is said to have been created in the image of God, because in him shone the image, that is, the knowledge of God and the likeness to the mind of God, that is, the understanding of the difference between the honorable and the shameful; and the powers of man concurred or agreed with this knowledge. The will had been turned to God before the Fall, the true knowledge of God glowed in man's mind, and in his will was love toward God. His heart assented to the true knowledge of God without any doubt. This knowledge established for us that we had been created to know and worship God and to obey Him as our Lord who had made us, cared for us, and had impressed His image upon us, who demanded and gave His approval to what was righteous, and on the contrary condemned and punished unrighteousness. Although in this corruption of our nature the image of God has been so deformed that the knowledge of Him does not shine forth like it did, yet the knowledge does remain, but our heart contends against it and our doubts arise because of certain things which seem to conflict with this knowl-

[1] Virgil, *Georg.* I, 514.

edge. For because punishments are deferred and evil befalls the good and good the evil, the human mind is uncertain regarding God's providence, that is, about the very first law, as to whether God really does bless the good and punish the wicked. Likewise all men by nature doubt that their prayers are heard. Yet the natural knowledge of God is not entirely extinct. Thus the first law of nature itself acknowledges that there is one God, who is eternal mind, wise, just, good, the Creator of things, kind toward the righteous and punitive toward the unrighteous, by whom there has been ingrafted into us the understanding of the difference between good and evil, and that our obedience is based on this distinction; that this God is to be invoked and that good things are to be expected from Him. Paul is citing this law of nature in Romans 1 and explaining it. It is obvious that it is in agreement with the First Commandment, and to this touchstone may be referred the discussion of Xenophon, Cicero, and men like them who followed their natural judgment and taught and often defended this law in opposition to atheists.

To the Second Commandment pertain laws and decrees concerning the taking of oaths and the penalties for perjury and also the punishments of those who curse God. For even human reason judges that punishments follow this, and the experience of all ages shows many examples. Here also pertain the countless statements regarding the punishments for perjury as we see them in Tibullus [I.10.3]—

"Ah, poor man who first hides his perjuries;
For punishment comes slowly on silent feet."

To the Third Commandment pertain any proven or well-known statements which have been published regarding religious ceremonies, for example, when the citizens of Athens used to swear this: I will defend the sacred rites both alone and with the help of others, because we believe these rites have come down to us from our fathers who understood what oaths should be taken regarding things which have been divinely transmitted to us. Then their godless posterity rashly devised new ceremonies and new ideas, with the result that men lost the rule of God which forbade new religions to be undertaken by human authority. To ungodly rites of this kind this ancient statement should not have been applied.

Up to this point I have discussed the laws of nature which apply to the First Table, and these are not as clear as those which follow which refer to civil life. This is natural, because human reason understands that there is a difference between the life of men and that of animals, and it also understands righteousness, chastity, truthfulness, moderation, kindness, and other virtues. Likewise the race of men understands that these qualities have been established for a lawful society and that virtues are to be developed for the sake of worshiping God, and even if we are not motivated by any sense of their usefulness, God has added manifest values in this society.

Thus our human reason first recognizes that in this society of ours there is need for order and direction. The first source of this direction is the authority of our parents. To this authority figure later on is added the power of the rulers who govern and defend the entire society.

To the Fifth Commandment pertains the statement which prohibits all evil violence which harms anyone. Although the value of this precept is clear (for the safety of human existence cannot be maintained if violence is permitted to go unrestrained), yet human reason not only teaches that these injuries must be avoided for the sake of expedience, but also the mind of man must be educated to this for the sake of justice. As justice commands that all innocent people are to be protected, so also it orders that violence be held in check by the magistrate and that the harmful members of society be removed. Nor is it difficult for prudent men to understand the many natural reasons for these statements, but the chief reason is that the understanding of justice has been divinely instilled into men just as the knowledge of numbers has been, even if our assent to it is weaker because of our stubborn heart, which does not heed the warnings of our reason and burns with anger because of hatred and desire for revenge. Nor was this law regarding doing an unjust murder written first on the tables of Moses. But immediately at the very beginning God by the judgment of nature added a clear testimony when He cursed and punished Cain because he killed his brother. Later on the Law was given in Gen. 9:6 which forbids murder and commands that it be punished by the magistrate. These are the words in the text, "Whosoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," Gen. 9:6, that is, through the magistrate. Man was made in the image of God, that is, that he might understand God, call upon Him, worship Him, and be righteous. God does not want this worship or the priesthood to be violated, but rather defended and supported, so that he may worship and call upon God. God Himself is the one who protects and avenges His violated image, His violated worshiper and priest. Because of this God has added clear testimonies to the laws of nature so that these things are not forgotten in the darkness of the human heart.

To the Sixth Commandment pertains the judgment of human reason which distinguishes the life of man from that of the beast and commands that men establish marriage in keeping with certain laws. He disapproves of adultery and moving from one bed to another. The existence of marriage proves that this judgment is inherent in human reason. Although this commandment is broken in many different ways contrary to this order because of the corruption of our nature, yet God immediately in Paradise sanctified the law concerning marriage. Later on He punished men's wandering lusts by the Flood and in other ways, in order to teach us by the law of nature.

To the Seventh Commandment applies the state-

ment: to give to each his own property. Human reason is aware that the distinction of ownerships applies to man's very nature and that property must be transferred by legal methods and that men are obligated to one another to practice justice and honorable treatment toward one another through their mutual duties. This natural judgment the philosophers call the law or right of nature for which there is a great mountain of proofs and many grades or degrees. Thus the lawyers speak a little differently, even though the laws of the gentiles have no other meaning except the common judgment of men, that is, the normal principles and examples drawn from them. Nor does the "communism" advocated by Plato[2] apply to this aspect of the nature of men in which there must be a distinction between the laws of empires and those of particular states, whereby evil men may be punished, and also distinctions of property ownership must be noted. Thus in carrying out these duties we should learn not only to consider the usefulness of the Law but also the fact that the order which has been established by God and demonstrated in nature must be preserved by us, both for the sake of God and also for keeping proper regulations to our contractual relationships, so that we do not defraud others but rather help them to keep their own property. Regarding this equality of the rights of ownership we have the most learned discourses of the philosophers and lawyers, which serve as testimonies to the law of nature or the natural law, that is, to the judgment of human nature on this matter.

In regard to the Eighth Commandment it is obvious that there has been grafted into human reason a power of judging which establishes that we should love and maintain the truth and avoid lying. Here again the value of this law and the duties related to it are very obvious, because, if trust in such contracts were taken away, there would be no lasting business relationships, no alliances or peace treaties; and court decisions would be made in vain if the truth were not required in areas of workmanship such as medicine and other arts. How evil life would be if the false were traded for the truth, poison given for remedies! God always adds countless values to His laws. We must not only consider the values but much more the fact that this has been ordained by God and that this order, namely the preservation of the concept of truth, must constantly be observed because we love God.

In reviewing the laws of nature I have followed the order of the Decalogue, for this order is clearest and shows the way which our own reason points out for us to follow. But regardless of the order and the number, the substance is the same, if something foreign does not confuse things. Further, it is beneficial to follow this order so that the agreement of the laws of nature with the Decalogue may be evident, and it is useful for many reasons that this be kept in view: First, in order that we may understand that the laws of nature themselves are also divinely instituted and that we may stress and correctly understand that the philosophers and law-givers approve of them and agree with them, and in order that we may reject statements contrary to this. It was for this reason that the divine law was proclaimed from heaven so that God might testify that He is the author of this natural knowledge and that He demands obedience in accordance with this knowledge and that He is accusing the human race because of its stubbornness. For God willed that the voice of His judgment against sin be known. Afterwards, it was also for the benefit of the saints that there be a well-defined testimony from God as to which works He requires and approves, so that in the weakness of our flesh human reason must not wander away, as has happened in the case of many law-givers who have made some iniquitous laws.

The Use of the Law

There is no doubt that the law of God demands both inner and outward obedience, as it says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart," Deut. 6:5. But since this corrupted nature of men cannot produce perfect obedience, as Paul so clearly testifies in Romans 7–8, and since this sin remains in us in this life in the form of doubt, lack of faith and insufficient fear and love of God, and countless desires which run counter to the law of God, it follows that men are not pronounced righteous, that is, accepted before God by reason of the Law. Therefore Paul in this controversy argues vigorously and separates the matter of justification from the Law. Even if human reason judges differently concerning sin and righteousness, even though controversies have arisen over the difference between human judgment and the Gospel, yet we must heed the voice of the Gospel which has been proclaimed from the very beginning that sins are forgiven to men and that they are reconciled and become pleasing to God, or righteous, that is, they are accepted for the sake of our Mediator, the Son, as it says in Rom. 5:2, "Through Him we have access to the Father by faith."

Thus the question arises: What is the use or purpose of the Law, if the works of the Law do not merit the remission of sins, or if we are not righteous by the Law? At this point we need to understand that there are three uses or duties for the Law.

The first is the pedagogical or civil use, for God wills that all men be compelled by the discipline of the Law, even the unregenerate, not to commit outward sins. Paul speaks of this use in 1 Tim. 1:19, "The law was laid down for the unrighteous," that they might be compelled to obey. That this discipline might be strongly supported, God established magistrates or governments over the human race; He wills that men be governed by laws and sound teaching; He wills that the wild ravings of men be held in check and be pun-

[2] See Plato's *Republic* and his *Laws.*

ished by the penalties imposed by their rulers, as it says in Deut. 19:19 ff., "You shall put the evil man out of your midst, so that the rest of the people shall hear of it and fear, and you shall have no pity on him." Previous to this God had established a much more unhappy prison, namely the universal calamities which afflict the human race, as Ps. 32:9 says regarding the causes of the troubles of mankind, "Their mouths must be held in with a bit and bridle that they will not come near to you." Men must be diligently taught regarding this discipline and these four reasons must be set before them:

1. It is necessary to show this to man because of the commandment of God to whom we owe obedience.

2. To avoid the penalties by which either the magistrate or God punishes our horrible crimes.

3. To preserve the public peace and order, for God demands discipline so that we do not practice violence against the person or property of others; He wills that peace and tranquility be maintained, so that men can be governed and taught. At this point we must speak a warning that we must preserve the life and property not only of ourselves but also of others and be mindful of the many crimes not only against the lives and fortunes of others but also in corrupting the minds of others. These injuries are not repaired, but the divine punishment for them follows.

4. The discipline of the Law is our "schoolmaster to Christ." The nobler gentiles have also seen other reasons for man's troubles, and there has been a great rage over the fact that nothing is improved by man's fear of calamities and punishments. But this fourth reason is more important and there is great praise for the discipline of the Law because it is called a schoolmaster unto Christ, that is to say, that for those who do not cease corrupting themselves by sins against their own conscience, Christ is of no effect, as it clearly says in 1 Cor. 6:9–10, "Fornicators, idolaters, adulterous people . . . shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Along the same line is the statement in 1 John 3:8, "Everyone who commits sin is of the devil." Thus it is necessary to curb our lusts so that we do not fight against the Holy Spirit when He moves our hearts. It also comes to this, that it is a part of discipline to hear and learn the Gospel through which the Holy Spirit is effective in us. It is very important that we remember these uses for the discipline of the Law, and yet not devise the errors of those who have taught that this discipline merits the forgiveness of sins or that it is without sin and is the fulfilling of the Law or the righteousness which avails before God.

Up to this point we have spoken of the civil or pedagogical use of the Law. Now we must say something regarding the second use of which Paul speaks so clearly in order to correct the errors of human judgment regarding sin and righteousness. Thus it is a second and very important use of the law of God to show our sin and to accuse, to terrify, and to condemn all men in this misuse of human nature. For the law of God which has been revealed to men is a perpetual judgment which condemns sin in the entire human race. Because the knowledge of the divine law has been grafted into our minds, and because it has been revealed in different ways by voice and examples as, for instance in Paradise, where God demanded obedience, and added the punishment, namely, death and other sorrows, in order that there might be testimonies of His judgment against sin. Afterwards many warnings and examples followed, such as the matter of Cain, the Flood, the destruction of the Sodomites and others. And the immutable judgment of God, whose eternal wrath presses upon all who are not freed through the knowledge of the Son of God. Therefore we should never get the idea that the law of God is a light matter and something changeable, as was the Laconic law, so that they used only iron money in the land of Laconia. But it is the judgment of God in which His horrible anger against sin is shown at all times, because it is always proclaimed and believed in the church even more than in the rest of the world, just as from the very beginning in Paradise and afterwards in the sermons of the patriarchs the voice of the Law sounded forth condemning sin and preaching repentance. Paul says in Rom. 1:18, "The wrath of God has been revealed from heaven against all wickedness of men who oppress the truth in unrighteousness." Here it is witnessed that the voice of God rings out in the church announcing the wrath of God against the sins of men.

As I have said, the voice of the Law resounds in the church, but even more the thunderbolts are felt by men such as Adam, Abraham, Jacob, David, Hezekiah, and Paul. They felt the terrors of knowing their own sins. For example, Hezekiah says in Is. 38:13, "As a lion He will break all my bones." The Psalms are full of these laments. In order that this judgment may be felt and sin recognized, the church has been placed under the cross, while in the meantime the blind and raging world despises the judgment of God. Therefore there is no doubt that the voice of the Law condemning sins must constantly be set forth and taught in the church, and indeed it would be a monstrous crime to conceal God's judgment and His voice which announces His wrath against sin, as it says in Jer. 1:9–10, "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have set you over the nations to overthrow and destroy." But in the church there is an argument over this question: Hypocrites think that the Law was laid down in order that it might merit reconciliation or take away sin. Paul calls us back from these errors and teaches a position foreign to the judgment of men. Indeed, he says, "Through the Law is the knowledge of sin," Rom. 3:20, as much as to say that the Law was laid down that it might accuse and condemn sin, but not take it away. Likewise Rom. 4:15, "The Law works wrath." Again, Rom. 7:13, "Through the Law sin became sinful beyond measure." Again, 1 Cor. 15:56,

"The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the Law." It would be absurd to apply these statements to civil matters, they contain warnings not about civil practices but about the judgment of God which we feel in times of true terror and true repentance, for the Law does not have this use for carnally secure men, as Paul says in Rom. 7:9, "I was once alive apart from the Law," that is, I was secure and unaware of the judgment of God; but afterwards I became terrified, recognized my own weakness and my sins. The Law had this use in the life of David when he was condemned by the prophet and became terrified over his adultery. Then the contrition, as they call it, can be clearly understood in his repentance, if we understand that it consisted of terrors of this kind. But the proclamation of the Gospel must be added which points to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and reveals the indescribable mercy of God who, although He is genuinely angry against sin and judges sin, to be sure, yet wills to free those who believe in His Son, whom He made a victim for us. Thus Paul says that we are terrified, not that we may perish but that we may flee to the Mediator, for "He includes all under sin that He may have mercy on all," Rom. 11:32.

The third use of the Law pertains to the regenerate. Insofar as the regenerate have been justified by faith, they are free from the Law. This must be said under this locus. For they are freed from the Law, that is, from the curse and the condemnation and the wrath of God which is set forth in the Law, that is to say, if they remain in the faith and fight against sin in confidence in the Son of God, and overcome the terrors of sin. Yet in the meantime it must be said that the Law which points out the remnants of sin, in order that the knowledge of sin and repentance may increase, and the Gospel also must proclaim Christ in order that faith may grow. Furthermore, the Law must be preached to the regenerate to teach them certain works in which God wills that we practice obedience. For God does not will that we by our own wisdom set up works or worship, but He wills that we be ruled by His Word, as it is written, "In vain do they worship Me by the commandments of men," Matt. 15:9. Again, "Your Word is a lamp unto my feet," Ps. 119:105. When human reason is not directed by the Word of God it is very likely to lack something. For it is seized by wicked desires or gives its approval to iniquitous works, as is apparent in the laws of the gentiles. The divine order that we are to obey God remains unchangeable. Therefore, even though we are free from the Law, that is from damnation, because we are righteous by faith for the sake of the Son of God, yet because it pertains to obedience, the Law remains, that is, the divine ordinance remains that those who have been justified are to be obedient to God. Indeed, they have the beginning of obedience which we shall discuss under its own locus as to how it is pleasing to God. These comments suffice to give instruction briefly regarding the threefold use of the Law. We shall return later to the second and third uses.

The Distinction between Counsels and Precepts

Ignorance of righteousness through faith has spawned many errors. From this ignorance flows the imagining of those who have devised the notion that in the Gospel account three counsels are given: (1) concerning not taking revenge, (2) concerning deserting our worldly goods, or poverty, as they call it, and (3) concerning virginity. It would be too long a task to rehearse all the errors which are contained in this ridiculous idea. Therefore I shall add only a few words.

First, we must deplore the blindness with which they add to the Law of God. They add begging or some other work like it which is not commanded by God, as an adornment under even more important names than the divine Law itself, as if any greater work could be imagined by any creature than that which is demanded in the First Commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart." And then, in the second place, they say many things about the perfection of these absurd notions.

Furthermore, they erroneously think that the Law of God speaks only of external discipline, so that under the law "You shall not kill" only unjust murder is prohibited, but private desire for revenge, malevolence, unjust hatred, and similar wicked ideas are not prohibited. Christ in Matt. 5[:21 ff.] condemns this error. He teaches that complete and perfect obedience to the Law of God is required, and that a just order is required for all the powers of man, both his inner and his external actions. And so by the Law the uncleaness of human nature is shown and condemned. Therefore, He also adds punishments for our inner corruption [v. 22]: "Whoever is angry with his brother without cause shall be guilty of judgment." Again [v. 28], "Everyone who looks at a woman in order to lust after her is already an adulterer." These are not, as many people think, statements of Stoic exaggeration (which are only idle musings signifying neither an action in our life nor the wrath of God). These statements of Christ bear witness that God is truly angry with the depravity of natural man, and that this is indeed a sin. And it is said in this way in order that we may understand that we do not satisfy the Law and we must seek mercy and flee to the mediator.

Redress[3]

There are doctrinal statements concerning redress everywhere. They are precepts. But some of them pertain to the office of rulers, and others speak of private redress, of hatred and wicked conflicts which

[3] The Latin word *vindicta* can mean redress, vengeance, revenge, or vindication. The translation employs whatever word seems most appropriate in each context.

arise particularly in sharp and excitable minds out of a desire for revenge, as broke out in the violent wrath of such men as Marius, Sulla, Caesar, and Pompey. And in the church there are no fewer examples than there are in other realms. Many people who have been motivated by malevolence and desire for revenge have stirred up controversies, as is specifically written regarding Arius. Therefore we must make a distinction concerning redress.

One kind is public, which seeks redress from the ruler by reason of God's command. Concerning this kind of redress it says in Rom. 13[:4], "He is God's minister to execute wrath on him who does evil." Nor is there any doubt that the ruler carries out his office and punishes sin by reason of the command of God. And they should know that they owe obedience to God, for the magistrate does not punish out of private desire but because of the will of God.

The guilty man undergoes punishment in order that he may become obedient to the command of God who has commanded that sins be punished. Nor does the Gospel prohibit this public redress or the work of the ruler, nor does the Gospel advise that it be omitted. Rather, it approves and confirms the office of ruler. Nor does the Gospel will that this office be unknown or neglected, especially since it has been divinely established. But because we do not give due consideration to the importance of this office and to the will of God, hypocritical people have devised insane ideas that we should not seek redress. The source of this idea is the same, namely, the stubbornness of men, and therefore men unwittingly comply with their punishments. For they do not perceive the command of God which gives precepts both to the ruler and to the evil-doer.

The second kind of redress is private, that is, it does not take place through the ruler or through laws. Concerning this private redress it says in Matt. 5[:43 ff.] and Rom. 12[:19] that we should not take vengeance. And these statements are true precepts, for God has sanctioned order whereby there are laws and judges, and He has subjected the human race to them. Thus it is His will that there be punishers and vindicators. He does not want this order to be upset. Therefore, He prohibits private redress, whether external or internal, and wills that with a true heart we give to God the task of taking revenge through His laws and His judges. Christ preaches about this order in Matthew 5 when He describes the Law and condemns hypocrisy which thinks that it can satisfy the Law of God even when there is manifest confusion of this order among men.

As it says in [Juvenal's] *Satyra* [13, 180], "Vindication is a more pleasant good than life itself."

Christ wants us to understand this confusion and to hold back our desire for private vindication, especially since the nature of men is now guilty and subject to death and penalties. Therefore our sins may accuse us in adverse circumstances, and we should not only see in this the sins of others, as David says of Shimei [2 Sam. 16:11–12], "Let him curse me, for God has said to do it. It may be that God will look upon my affliction and will repay me with good for these curses." And there is a remarkable example of a mind which restrains the desire for revenge—when David draws back and spares Saul, when he could have killed him without any difficulty, but he was not willing to occupy the kingship unless it was given to him by God. These examples should be carefully considered in order that we may more correctly understand the Law of God, so that we admit our weakness and learn to keep it under control. This doctrine is the peculiar property of the Holy Spirit. For the history of the Gentiles has no examples similar to David's.

Let us hold to the principle that the command has been given to the rulers that they are to obtain redress in keeping with the laws, and that negligence in their duties is displeasing to God, as it is said in Deut. 19[:19–21], "Put away the evil person, that those who remain may have fear . . . and do not have pity on him" [Vulgate]. And on the contrary, since there is no precept, they are not to take vengeance nor disturb the order which has been established by God, either by the hand or by a decision of the mind. This is a useful rule for our life, and it strengthens governments and preserves peace. From this point, we can understand how great an absurdity there would be if we followed the raving of the monks: When the discussion concerns the fact that we should not take vengeance, they allow the rulers not to punish crimes, but they even allow private persons to stir up sedition for the sake of revenge.

Since these imaginings of the fanatics are false and pernicious, we should absolutely drive them out of the church. This was the reason that Christ so often prohibits taking revenge, because He wanted to remove from the apostles the false opinion of thinking that the kingdom of the Messiah was going to be a worldly kingdom and that the Gentiles were to be won over by force of arms. On the contrary, Christ teaches that the apostles will not take up arms, but they shall be preachers of the Gospel. Without human defenses and without arms, they shall gather together the church. The church will be liable to the severity of tyrants, and yet it will have a divine deliverance. In this way, Christ has guided His teachers of all ages, so that they may perform their duties by correct teaching and put their dangers into God's hands. They are not to trust in human protection, nor break out from the boundaries of their calling, nor establish kingdoms for themselves under the pretext of the Gospel, as the Anabaptists of Münster have done.

There is often public dispute about the statement: the law of nature gives the right to repel force with force. First we must consider what this statement means. For if it is a matter of the natural knowledge or love (Greek *storgē*), then we have to ask the question of how this statement has been established, so that it does not become perverted under some pretext or the admixture

of unjust desire. For natural laws are not unrestrained forces, but the ordinances of a certain and definite thing in nature. Therefore it is right and lawful to circumscribe this dictum within certain boundaries. Thus it should be understood in regard to open violence and with reference to necessary defense against sudden force or attack, as when a robber assaults a peaceful traveler on his journey, or when a certain nation brings an unjust war upon another, or when riotous people attack the home of another person. In such cases, because a ruler or judge is absent, the right to defend oneself is granted. And there is a difference between defense and revenge or punishment for a crime. The correct line of reasoning is that it is not right to harm another person, and that a person must defend himself against unjust force by ordinary and legitimate powers, as in a just war or self-defense, even when it is not possible to call upon the services of the magistrate. For there is in nature a righteous love (Greek *storgē*), a desire for self-preservation in the face of unjust violence.

When the statement regarding repelling manifest violence is understood in this way and manner (as right reason believes and as the laws themselves declare), then it is a true statement that it is lawful to repel force with force. Nor is this in conflict with the Gospel or with the statement [Matt. 5:44] "You shall love your enemies"; for the Gospel does not abolish the law of nature or the bonds of political society, that is, the laws which are in agreement with sound reason. Indeed, for this very reason, God has united men under various offices in this society, so that there is the opportunity to exercise and proclaim faith, obedience, and love. The father of the household has the obligation to defend his wife and children. Therefore, in defending his home, he is fulfilling his duty or office of love; and his faith should be manifest in his mind or intention. In the same way, the political leader is obligated to defend his subjects in just cases, and therefore when he wages a just war he is carrying out his duty of love, and the worship of God should be manifest in this danger.

These acts are not in conflict with the Gospel, which wills that each person fulfill his lawful calling; nor are they in conflict with the statement [Matt. 5:44], "You shall love your enemies." For love, defense, and punishment are not self-contradictory. For the purpose of love is established in this—that for the sake of God, we love and give preference to our love for Him. Since King Asa could not love his mother for God's sake because she worshiped idols, he punished her. In the same way, if Constantine had continued to endure Licinius' attacks against the church, he would have performed duties which were not pleasing to God. Therefore he put him down by force of arms.

I have discussed these points regarding the dictum that it is lawful to repel force by force, so that learned people should consider—to the degree that it is valid—whether the laws of wars are drawn from this fountain. But we must also compare it with another dictum [Matt. 26:52], "He who takes up the sword shall perish by the sword." To "take up the sword" is to fail to restrict something which has been given by the laws. Therefore he who brings in unjust power "takes up the sword." On the contrary, he who uses the sword in lawful defense does not "take up the sword," but rather restricts it to that purpose which has been given by the laws. On this point Christ carefully distinguishes between the offices of rulers and the offices of ministers of the Gospel. God has given the sword to the ruler so that he might use it in his lawful office. And it is abused or misused if he wages private vendettas or vents his wrath in capricious raging, as Nero sinned. But on the other hand, God does not will that the ministry of the Gospel be an earthly kingdom. Therefore He forbids the apostles to engage in battle. The respective duties are distinguished in this statement. We must carefully consider the distinction, so that the teachers of the church do not teach that the church must rely on human defenses, or that it must take up arms against the government. They must understand that the church is in the care of God and that it must look to Him for help. Thus God has delivered His church from the savagery of Pharaoh, the Chaldeans, Maxentius, and other tyrants. And thus in this dictum not only is doctrine taught regarding the different duties of people, but also it is correctly shown that the church is defended by God and delivered by Him. This statement brings much comfort to the godly. So much for the matter of redress.

Poverty

The confession of the Gospel brings many dangers to the life and fortunes of men, since zeal for the Gospel is in disrepute and unprofitable. In this common life among other common misfortunes, poverty is a very common kind of misfortune, and it often attacks the church with great harshness. Therefore it is necessary for us to have teaching and comfort on the matter, so that we do not think that we have been forgotten by God because of our poverty. For this reason many sermons are found in the prophets and in the Gospel regarding the subject of poverty. And precepts are laid down concerning constancy, so that we do not cast off the Gospel in our weariness of being poor, and so that in our desire for wealth and power we do not allow ourselves to be drawn away into the company of evil things. Comforts are also given in which God promises that He will enrich the needy, as, for example, the statement [Matt. 19:29], "He who leaves home and field will receive a hundred-fold," but He adds the words "with tribulation."

The statements of the Gospel are filled with these important matters. They contain salutary doctrine or teaching regarding the great exercises of faith and other virtues. They are not to be distorted toward monkish hypocrisy, toward the forsaking of our property, or toward a confusion of the social order of men. For the Gospel neither commands nor counsels that we leave

our property, if it is not forcibly taken from us. It neither commands nor counsels that we put all things in common, especially since it is certain that there is a distinction of ownership and property which has been established by God. Godly people should know that property rights are pleasing to God, and that this entire distinction and exchange of property is legitimate. For God wills that in these civil duties our faith be manifested and our love exercised along with other virtues.

Finally, the very ridding of ourselves of property brings on either begging, which in healthy and idle people is a form of robbery, or better cooking in a monastery which certainly owns property. For no society can live without something of its own. Other words can be used, but they cannot support this kind of thing. There are many testimonies that the Gospel approves of the distinction of owners and property and riches. First, the law says [Ex. 20:15], "You shall not steal." Here God Himself with His own voice sanctions and approves the distinction of owners. Likewise, it is absolutely certain that kings and princes can be the heirs of eternal life, and they can be righteous and pleasing to God in their governance, as was the case with Joseph, Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Cornelius, the centurion, and others. But kingdoms cannot be maintained without wealth. Likewise in 1 Cor. 7[:30], buying and selling are condoned.

But each aspect of this matter requires great skill, great care, and virtue—to be able to bear both wealth and poverty correctly. In order that you may hold property rightly, there must be a good conscience which knows that this ordinance of God is necessary in order that there be this distinction of property. And you shall not upset it by defrauding others, as often happens when men increase their wealth by sinful business practices. Rather, you should preserve equality for the sake of God, who has commanded that you keep away from the property of others. Therefore you should declare your gratitude to God by seeking equality, and give thanks to God, who has granted your property to you and still preserves it, as it is written [Prov. 10:22], "The blessing of God makes a person rich."

In the second place, you should know that the poor are to be helped liberally, as Christ often commands, for example [Luke 6:38]: "Give and it shall be given to you." And a promise is added for two reasons, namely, so that we may understand that because of their liberality, the godly are deserving of great rewards, and so that we may also understand that God commands these duties in order that our faith may be strengthened by the expectation of rewards. Both of these causes are evident in the example of the widow of Zarephath [cf. 1 Kings 17:8 ff.]. She fed Elijah and looked to God for her food. And thus God fed the woman and adorned her with other great rewards, and she herself exercised her faith in a remarkable way when she gave to him all the crumbs which she had left over. And the method of sharing is described in 2 Cor. 8[:13], "Not that there be ease for some and a burden for you."

The loveliest statement about property and liberality and its rewards is found in Solomon [Prov. 5:15–18], "Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well. Let your fountains be dispersed abroad, streams of water in the streets. But you, master,[4] be the sole owner of them, and let no strangers be partakers with you, and let your fountain be blessed." This is a universal and very important doctrine which sets forth a very lovely figure of speech. It forbids grabbing from other people. Thus he says [v. 15], "Drink from your own cistern." He gives his approval to the concept of property when he says, "You, master, be the sole owner of them." He joins also to this the precept regarding liberality [v. 16], "Let your fountains be dispersed," that is, from your own crops or produce decide to increase the property of others. He also shows the method of this liberality: "I do not want," he says, "your inheritance to be squandered, or your basic possessions to be thrown away. This is the method you should follow. Hold on to your principal and preserve your inheritance for the sake of our children and the public good. But help those in need out of your profits, and do so generously." He has been speaking concerning the ownership of property and the practice of generosity or liberality. Then he finally adds also the teaching concerning rewards and faith: Exercise your faith in these activities. If you realize that these benefits and their preservation are a gift of God, then you will defraud no one. You will be generous and you may expect blessing from God. This is the true teaching of the church of Christ regarding this matter. And we must flee the ravings of those who devise a Platonic sharing of things as being commanded or praised in the Gospel.

But just as it requires great skill to own property in the right way, so it requires great skill and is a mark of distinction to endure poverty in the right way. Regarding poverty, we must first recognize that it is the will of God that we be subject to these common afflictions such as diseases, death, and need. And we must also understand that these afflictions are not signs for the godly that they have been cast off by God. They are exercises which instruct us regarding the sin on account of which our nature is subject to death. Repentance and prayer also are exercizes. Therefore you must learn that it is obedience to God, who has willed that you be exercised in this way, just as this obedience is required in a general way, in keeping with the statement [1 Peter 5:6], "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God."

Further, there must be constancy so that in the desire to escape poverty we do not act against God. Christ is preaching this constancy when He says [Matt.

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[4] Melanchthon appears to interpret *hyparchonta* in the LXX as referring to a master or lord. The text of *CR* has *Dominus,* uppercased, but the context calls for a human master.

5:3], "Blessed are the poor in spirit," for they are obeying God by enduring their poverty and the other difficulties which accompany poverty. For there are heavy loads which come to us when we are pressed down and despised by the powerful, when we become liable to injury and insults, and see the sufferings of our children. In the midst of these evils, to keep our constancy of mind, not to seek protection either of people or the power of evil counsels, not to be moved by our poverty to making a public tumult—in this situation, greatness of mind shines forth amid our calamities. It is a great dignity. Examples are poor men such as Jeremiah, many of the prophets, the Baptist, Christ, the apostles, and many of the martyrs—men who were born in highest positions, and yet were deprived of all their possessions—men such as Attalus. Also godly men who had much property were treated the same way, such as Job, David, and others. They knew that some people must be rich, and they carried out their calling; but yet they did not put their riches before their confession. Although they lost their riches, they did so willingly in obedience to God and in keeping with their calling. This obedience and likewise this constancy in confession are laudable. They are the worship of God.

But the monks do a manifest injustice to the statement of Christ, because they hide behind their hypocrisy, as we see in Matt. 19[:29], "He who leaves his home or his father or his mother . . . " There is a twofold desertion here, the one out of God's command in confession or vocation, as when tyrants command them either to reject the Gospel or give up their possessions; the other when a person who has been called to rule over the churches hesitates to do so because he might encounter dangers and hatred, or would rather preserve his personal property. In such cases the laudable thing is to renounce one's property. For we must give precedence to the confession of the Gospel and the calling to teach it over all human things, above our life and our fortune.

There is very good reason why this concept is repeated so commonly in the Gospel. For instances often occur where confession not only compels us to give up our property, but it compels us to do the much harder thing of offending those who are very dear to us, as well as the wishes of great and honorable princes and other prominent people whose judgment it is very difficult to disregard. That is, it is hard to be called the authors of discord in our country. These things cannot fail to torment our minds terribly, whenever God commands us to put the Gospel first. Our consolation must be that He has promised help and rewards.

Thus in Deut. 33[:8], in the benediction to the tribe of Levi, a reward is given to him by name because he has taught the true doctrine, and speeches are added regarding the dangers he endured and the promises he has received. These are the words to Levi [v. 8], "This is Your law, which is given to Your holy man, whom You have tested at Massah." This is the first place a definite kind of teaching is commended to the family of Levi, and in which He forbids any other questionable doctrine to be taught. "You have," He says, "the law given by Moses; teach this purely and do not attach any new opinions or new worship to it." Then He adds the command regarding constancy in dangers [vv. 9–10]: "He who says to his father and his mother, 'I do not know you,' and to his brothers, 'I do not know them,' and does not know his own brothers—these men keep Your Word and protect Your convenant, your judgments, O Jacob, and your law, O Israel.[5] They place incense in Your wrath and burnt offerings upon Your altar." This is the second part which admonishes teachers concerning great controversies, dangers, hatreds, and punishments which must be endured in contending for godly doctrine. These are certainly harsh things to say to parents, our country, and our children, "I do not know you," to appear to be an enemy of one's country, an instigator of rebellion. But we see the prophets and apostles burdened with the same accusations. And therefore, lest we be broken in our minds, the promise is added [Deut. 33:11], "Bless, O Lord, his strength, and receive the works of his hands; strike the backs of his enemies, and let not those who hate him rise again," that is, "Help, O God, those who teach rightly. Let their ministry be effective and salutary, and press down godless teachers and tyrants." The words of Christ are taken from this statement of Moses. And both speak of most important matters, as the wise reader can easily judge. Therefore these very significant statements are not to be twisted to support the empty superstitions of the monks.

I have cited these statements in order that they may be noted by godly scholars, many of whom are under attack by various calamities because of their concern for true doctrine. By statements such as these which have been cited, they can strengthen themselves so that they do not give up their proper concerns, and realize that God will reward them, as Christ says [Matt. 6:33], "Seek first the kingdom of God . . . and these things shall be added to you." Cf. also Ps. 84[:10], "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God . . . "; Isa. 30[:20–21], "The Lord will give you bread in tribulation and water in distress. He will not allow your teacher to leave . . . This is the way; walk in it, and do not turn aside from it." Let us be strengthened by statements of this kind, and let us serve God in spreading His true doctrine and beware that we do not pervert it by our offenses.

There is a second kind of desertion of our worldly goods without a calling, indeed a superstitious desertion, when people imagine that taking an oath and becoming a beggar is the worship of God. Such desertion is in no way praiseworthy. Indeed, it is merely an opin-

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[5] Melanchthon follows the Vulgate. The Hebrew reads, "They will teach Your judgments to Jacob, and Your law to Israel."

ion which arises out of superstition, a form of heathen godlessness, as it says [Matt. 15:9; Isa. 29:13], "In vain they worship Me with the commandments of men."

Chastity

Through marvelous wisdom God has instituted procreation in human nature and has sanctioned marriage under a definite law in Gen. 2[:24]. And now after the fall of Adam He wills that men use marriage for two reasons, for the sake of procreation and for restraining their lusts, as Paul says [1 Cor. 7:2], "Because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife." God sets so high a value on this ordinance that He very severely prohibits all extramarital love affairs and connections, and seriously punishes them. Many statements and examples bear witness, for example, Heb. [13:4], "God will judge fornicators and adulterers"; 1 Cor. 6[:9–10, 18], "Make no mistake; fornicators, idolators and adulterers shall not possess the kingdom of God. . . . Flee fornication"; Eph. 5[:6], "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon those who are disobedient"; 1 Thess. 4[:3–5], "This is the will of God: your sanctification, that you should abstain from sexual immorality and each should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, and not in the passion of lust, as the Gentiles"; Heb. 12[:14], "Follow after holiness, without which no one will see God."

In the Scriptures there are examples of punishments. Gen. 5[6:2 ff.] lists among the causes of the deluge the wanderings of lust; in Gen. 19 five cities were destroyed because of the frightful nature of their lust. And it is especially amazing that the raving of these cities was so great, since they had as their neighbor Shem, who had actually seen the flood. And doubtless he was an active condemner and preacher against these things. They had also heard other great men, such as Abraham and Lot, but their ingratitude toward God was very great. For not long before they went astray, when the city was captured by the Chaldeans and the citizen carried away, Abraham had delivered them. But then when they were secure, they let down the bars and gave free rein to all their lusts.

In Num. 25, twelve princes were hanged because of their debauchery [v. 4], and 24,000 men were killed [v. 9]. In Lev. 18[:24] it is written that the Canaanites were destroyed because of their incestuous lusts. In Judges 20 almost the entire tribe of Benjamin was destroyed because of the rape of the wife of a Levite. In 2 Sam. 12[:9 ff.] David is very seriously denounced and punished because of his adultery. Solomon permitted instances of idolatry because of his lusts. And Jeremiah often mentions the adultery of Jerusalem, along with cases of murder. In these examples is written the reason for these testimonies regarding the judgment of God. We should know that lusts are always punished, and that calamities do not fall upon the impure merely by accident, but they are punishments by which God shows His wrath against this sin. Therefore, calamities follow the horrible lusts among the Gentiles, and they must be laid at the same door and violate the same rule that is found in Heb. 13[:4]: "God will judge fornicators and adulterers."

Moreover, the examples from among the heathen or Gentiles are so horrible that they cannot even be thought of without great sorrow. We shall mention only some of the great changes in governments which have taken place because of these lustful actions. Troy was completely destroyed because of the kidnaping of Helen. Thebes was punished because of the kidnaping of Chrysippus and the incest of Oedipus. The kings were thrown out of Rome because of the foul act against Lucretia. The government was again changed because of the crime committed by the decemviri under Appius. There is a long list of this kind in Aristotle's *Politica* 5, where he cites these cases which brought great changes to governments. Among these he includes many cases of lust and gives many examples. The sons of Pisistratus were ejected from Athens because of their shameful conduct against a girl. The leader of Laconia, Pausanias, ravished a girl whom he had taken by force at Byzantium and afterwards killed her, and in a marvelous miracle the voice of a statue threatened punishment upon him, saying, "Your punishment must be poured out upon you; your crime will bring destruction."

And later on when Pausanias was thrown out of Byzantium, Athens received him. But even though he accomplished many important things and even destroyed the Persian army, yet afterwards he was forced to die by starvation at the hands of the Ephori. Finally, these accounts are filled with examples which show the wrath of God against lustfulness. Therefore let us learn the stern command regarding chastity.

Now chastity is either the normal custom of marriage, or the purity of the celibate life for those who are suited for celibacy by reason of their immature age or in those who possess a remarkable gift. I have made specific mention of the immature age. For this arrangement in nature was not established rashly, but so that we might live through this period of life in a pure manner and, with a normal degree of care, can retain our purity in that period when our bodies are still growing. But many people are caught in the traps of the devil, the corrupt practices of evil companions, and other vices and pleasures because of laziness. Thus good minds must be instructed that although a person's age is not yet mature enough for marriage, yet with proper care he or she can live a pure life and that God earnestly requires this work, and that those who have been corrupted in this area shall encounter great punishments. If Joseph had defiled himself by adultery, he would have lost those gifts with which he had been adorned, and having been forsaken by God he would have fallen into even more sins. Thus also David added adultery to the murder of an excellent man, and produced great of-

fenses, because of which many other punishments followed. And Paul specifically mentions in Eph. 4 [:18 ff.] that blindness is the punishment for lust, that those who love it are forsaken by God. They do not see or hear right counsels, and they bring down upon themselves punishments and death. But those who have completed this period of their life, and who recognize that they are not suited for the celibate life, understand that they are compelled by God's command to marry, as Paul clearly says [1 Cor. 7:2], "In order to avoid fornication, let each have his own wife." This mandate prescribes marriage for all those who believe that they are not suited for celibacy, both lay and clerical.

Neither human laws nor monastic promises can do away with the ordinance and command of God. God hates unrestrained lusts and fleshly contaminations. Therefore, He wills that husband and wife be joined together under the defined law of marriage which was established at the beginning in Gen. 2[:24] and repeated in Matt. 19[:5 ff.] and 1 Corinthians 7. This societal arrangement truly is chastity and purity, that is, it is a condition which has been ordained by God and is pleasing to God. It involves countless exercises of faith, love, and patience. And not only is marriage the fountain of the human race, but it is the most important bond in our common society. Furthermore, God wills that human procreation be preserved until the church is filled, and that civil life among men continue in order that the church can teach others.

Therefore it is absolutely certain that lawful marriage is pleasing to God. But the devil easily draws away the ungodly into the idea that lusts are unpunished. Thus in the church he increases lusts under the pretext of chastity by the use of notable deceit, and he urges on fanatical spirits so that they prohibit marriage, either for all or for the priests. This suggestion of the devil has no other purpose than the contamination of more people and the establishing of license to commit many crimes. For godly people should consider how many multitudes of souls the law of celibacy has dragged into hopelessness over the eternal wrath of God, and also into eternal blasphemies against Him.

Therefore there ought to be no legal authority for celibacy. The notions of the monks who imagine that celibacy is the highest worship of God and merits the remission of sins and life eternal, must be vigorously refuted and rejected. And finally, these people bring great darkness over the Gospel while they also entrap the inexperienced in the bondage of vows. Many are thus terribly perverted. At the same time, the devil both obscures the Gospel and increases lusts. We must carefully consider these matters and engrave in our minds the divine warnings and keep in view the horrible examples of punishments, so that we may truly be alert, lest we pervert God's ordinance. We must determine that all unions of the sexes outside of lawful marriage is mortal sin, as it is said over and over again [Heb. 13:4], "Fornicators and adulterers shall not possess the kingdom of God."

Therefore we must keep a good conscience, avoid the lapses of our youth, and then in our mature years marry, if there is need for it, in obedience to the command of God. Those who despise this arrangement should understand that they bring punishments upon themselves and the whole human race. We should also consider that God cannot be called upon by an evil conscience, as it says in 1 John 3:21, "If our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God." In order that you may be able to call upon God, you must keep a good conscience. What sadder thing can be said than that a man is living without invoking God, without God, without His guidance and defense? The devil more and more blinds them while they live, and ties them up in various sins, as their daily experiences demonstrate.

The monks clamor that Paul preferred virginity because he clearly says [1 Cor. 7:38], "He who does not marry does better." The godly reader should know that this entire section needs to be read and considered, for it carefully instructs the reader in both of its parts. In the beginning it deals with the precept of God that we are to avoid fornication, and for this reason each is to have his own wife [v. 2]. Then it exhorts godly living. But it goes on to add [v. 7], "But each has his own gift." Since he puts virginity first, he is speaking about what is suitable for the person. And then this also must be considered: By this comparison, good things are being compared with one another in keeping with their purposes. It is not the purpose to inquire what merits the remission of sins or reconciliation. Nor does the comparison take place in order that worship may be established which is in keeping with the will and judgment of men. It is an error to devise the notion that the remission of sins is merited because of celibacy, or that we should pay particular attention to it because through it there is a peculiar and special worship of God, or that marriage is an impure kind of life, on account of which man either does not please God or at least is less pleasing to Him. These errors are the doctrine of devils and absolutely must be refuted.

But Paul is praising virginity in people who are suited for it, and he praises it because there is a useful purpose for it, not that it is a greater worship of God than marriage. But [he praises it] because the celibate form of life is more convenient for a certain kind of ministry, since families and the cares of domestic problems often are a hindrance to the ministry, especially for those who are not strong. These points are true, but one has one gift, and another has a different gift. This instruction must always be kept in mind, and many who are celibate, even if they live a pure life physically, yet have minds which are occupied with illicit desires. Many people are tormented more by lustful cares in seeking protection and the splendors of this world's goods, than most godly and happily married people.

Locus 7
The Gospel

There is no doubt that the apostles with remarkable wisdom gave such a sweet and pleasant name to their teaching to distinguish the Law from the promise of reconciliation. The prophets also in their proclamation used the peculiar term *bissar,* which meant "to announce good news." Further, *euaggelion* is an old word which even in Homer [*Odyssey,* 14.152] signifies that a gift is to be given to the one who brings good news, while elsewhere in the Greek language it refers to a message announcing good and happy things, just as the apostles used the term. And there are clear instances of this usage in Plutarch's *Life of Artaxerxes* [14 (1.1018b)], where the words *euaggeliōn misthon* are used and the word *euangelium* must be understood as a speech which announces good news. In the same writer there are many instances of this.[1] There is also extant a witness to its use in his *Life of Pompey,* "Letter carriers came from the sea bearing good tidings" [cf. *Pompey,* 66 (1.654b)]. Cicero says the same thing to Atticus [*Ad Atticum,* 2.3.1 or 13.40.1].

Therefore the sweetness of the name should alert the pious to a new kind of teaching and the difference between the Law and the Gospel. Nor are we creating new terminology more precise than necessary, as many hypocrites are now caviling. John the apostle at the beginning of his gospel [1:17] sets forth this clear distinction: "The Law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." For it is necessary to distinguish precepts from the remission of sins and from promises; likewise, the free promise from promises that are not free. The Law, as we have said above, is a teaching that requires perfect obedience toward God, does not freely remit sins, and does not pronounce people righteous, that is, acceptable before God, unless the Law be satisfied. Although it has promises, yet they have the condition that the Law must be fulfilled. On the contrary, the Gospel, even when it makes its proclamation about repentance and good works, nevertheless contains the promise of the benefits of Christ, which is the proper and primary teaching of the Gospel, and this must be separated from the Law. For the Gospel freely forgives sins and pronounces us righteous even if we do not satisfy the Law. How these can be reconciled—that the Gospel along with the Law preaches about repentance and yet is a gracious promise—this we shall explain below. But first we must warn the reader that he must observe the difference between these promises, for the Law also has promises.

We must understand that in the divine Scriptures there are two kinds of promises. Certain of them are added to the Law and have the condition of the Law, that is, the promise is given subject to the fulfillment of the Law. Such are promises of the Law. The Law teaches that God is good and merciful, but to those who are without sin. Human reason also teaches the same thing, for our reason does have some knowledge of the Law. Here let each person consult his own experience. For we know by nature that God is merciful, but only toward those who are worthy, that is, those who are without sin. Yet a person cannot be certain that he is pleasing God, since he is unworthy and unclean. Thus the Law and the promises of the Law, since they are conditional, leave our consciences in doubt.

The second kind of promise belongs to the Gospel. It does not have the condition of the Law as a cause for its fulfillment, that is, it does not make its promises on the condition that the Law be fulfilled, but freely for the sake of Christ. This is the promise of the remission of sins, or reconciliation or justification, concerning which the Gospel primarily speaks, so that these benefits are sure and do not depend upon the condition of fulfilling the Law. For if we are to believe that we will have remission of sins only when we have satisfied the Law, then we will have to despair of the remission of our sins. Therefore remission and reconciliation or justification are given freely, that is, not because of our worthiness. Yet there had to be some sacrifice for us. Therefore Christ was given and made a sacrifice for us, so that for His sake we might be assured that we are pleasing to the Father.

Thus this Gospel promise of reconciliation is different from the promise of the Law, because it is promised freely for the sake of Christ. Therefore Paul carefully and repeatedly sets before us this term "freely," as Rom. 4:16 says: "Therefore it is freely by faith, that the promise might be sure." The term "freely for the sake of Christ" spells the difference between the Law and the Gospel. For if we do not see this word concerning the free promise, doubt remains in our hearts, the Gospel is transformed into Law, and it renders our consciences just as uncertain regarding the remission of our sins or our justification as the Law or the natural judgment of our reason do.

Thus our adversaries, no matter how vociferously they protest that they are teaching the Gospel, nevertheless, because they do not teach about free reconciliation, still leave our consciences in doubt, and in place of the Gospel they are teaching the Hesiodic law, that is, the judgment of natural reason. Thus our mind and eyes must turn their attention to this term "freely." It is necessary to teach regarding this free promise in order that the matter may be certain, so that doubt may

[1] Cf. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* 2.722–23.

be banished from our consciences and they may have firm comfort in the face of the real terrors that afflict us. In their midst we can correctly judge how necessary this gracious promise is. And it is to this struggle that this doctrine is especially to be referred.

We must also understand that the promise has to be received by faith, as Paul teaches in Rom. 4:16: "Therefore it is freely by faith, that the promise might be sure. . . ." And in 1 John 5:10: "He who does not believe God makes Him a liar." Thus the word "freely" does not exclude faith, but it does exclude our worthiness as a condition, and it transfers the cause of this blessing from ourselves to Christ. It does not exclude our obedience, but it only transfers the cause of our blessing away from the worthiness of our own obedience and attributes it to Christ, in order that the blessing may be certain. Thus the Gospel speaks of repentance, but in order that the reconciliation may be certain, it teaches that sins are forgiven and that we are pleasing to God not because of the worthiness of our repentance or our renewal. This is necessary comfort for pious consciences. From this we can judge how to reconcile our statement that the Gospel speaks about repentance and yet freely promises reconciliation. Later we shall speak more fully on this paradox.

Christ defines the Gospel in the last chapter of Luke as clearly as an artist when He commands us to teach "repentance and remission of sins in His name" [v. 47]. Therefore the Gospel is the preaching of repentance and the promise. Human reason does not by nature comprehend this, but it is divinely revealed that God has promised that for the sake of Christ, His Son, He will remit sins and pronounce us righteous, that is, accepted by Him; and He gives the Holy Spirit and eternal life, if only we believe, that is, trust that these blessings come to us for the sake of Christ. These things are promised freely, that they may be sure.

This is the definition of the Gospel in which we lay hold on three Gospel blessings: that for the sake of Christ our sins are freely remitted; that we are freely pronounced righteous, that is, reconciled or accepted by God; that we are made heirs of eternal life. These three parts we shall explain later on. Only keep this in mind, that these blessings belong to the Gospel and are otherwise summed up in the one word "justification."

The Need for the Promise of the Gospel

After human nature has become oppressed by sin and death because of the fall of Adam, even though some knowledge of the Law remains, yet because sin inheres in our nature, our consciences cannot understand that God is willing to forgive if they hear nothing except the Law. For the Law does not teach that sins are forgiven freely. We know that we are not without sin, and we perceive it very clearly when our minds are really terrified by the judgment of God. Therefore there is need for a gracious and free forgiveness, and God has revealed through His mercy that He is willing to forgive us and restore eternal life to us. He has also supplied the Sacrifice for us, His own Son, that we may know that these blessings have been given for the sake of His Son and not because of our worthiness or merit. This Gospel promise was revealed immediately after the fall of Adam, so that there was no lack of comfort for that first church.

This is the one and the same Gospel by which all the saints from the beginning of the world have been saved in all periods of history—Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, the prophets, and the apostles. Therefore we must not imagine that the patriarchs were saved by the natural law and the Jews by the law of Moses and that we are saved by some kind of law of our own. There is absolutely only one Law, the moral law of all ages and of all peoples, as we have said above; but neither the patriarchs nor the Jews nor the Gentiles nor we ourselves are saved by satisfying this Law. No one satisfies the Law. The Law leaves our consciences in doubt.

The difference between the patriarchs and Xenophon, Cicero, and other good men like them is that although they all knew the Law, they did not all know the Gospel. Thus Xenophon, Cicero, and the others were in doubt as to whether God cared about them, whether God was favorably inclined toward them, whether they were heard by God. For since they knew the Law, they saw that they were not innocent; but the Law taught them that God was kindly disposed toward those who are without sin. They did not know the Gospel about the free remission of sins. On the other hand, Abraham, Jacob, and men like them, because they knew the Gospel, knew that their sins were forgiven them, that they had a God who was favorable toward them, that God cared about them, that they were heard by God, even though they were unworthy. Therefore it is written: "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness" [Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3].

There is one Law, known by nature to all peoples and ages; and there is one Gospel, but it is not known by nature but only by divine revelation. Thus Paul calls it a "hidden mystery" [1 Cor. 2:7]. And John [1:18] says that "the Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has revealed Him to us." All of these points will be explained more fully when we speak a little later about grace and about justification.

Now, since we say that the Fathers received the same Gospel, we must show first in what way the Gospel was revealed from the beginning. I will cite a few such passages and from them similar passages in the reading of the prophets should be referred to. For the Gospel was revealed and appeared little by little, with increasing clarity, as the prophets preached this free and gracious reconciliation.

The promise concerning Christ and His benefits

was first revealed to Adam immediately after the Fall, so that, even though he had fallen under death and the wrath of God, he yet might have the consolation by which he could know both that God was again and would continue to be favorably inclined toward him and that death at some point would be overcome. That first promise clearly sets forth these two benefits, even though it seems to be rather obscure to us; but to Adam in his status at that time it was not obscure. "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall crush your head, and you shall lie in wait for His heel," Gen. 3:15.

This is a marvelous account, one that can seem ridiculous and fabulous to the ungodly. But the pious will see that the most important matters are here dealt with in the briefest possible way. Here is a description of the beginning of the punishment for sin, that because of sin the devil with his cruel tyranny is going to oppress the human race with sins and death, as the very history of the world testifies and which is all shown in the terrible sentence laid upon Adam.

Then there is added in this verse a brief description of the reign of Christ, that it is in the future, that the seed of the woman is going to crush the head, that is, the kingdom, of the serpent; that is, that He will destroy sin and death. This consolation raises Adam up; he recognizes that he is at peace with God, even though he sees that he is unworthy and unclean. He sees what he has lost, but he awaits that Seed by whom his lost righteousness and eternal life are to be restored to him. This trust in His mercy pleases God. The words that are added, that the devil "will lie in wait for the heel of the Seed," Adam understood to mean that Christ and the saints will be afflicted in this life but that Christ will nevertheless overcome the kingdom of the devil.

Later on the promise was renewed to Abraham: "In your Seed shall all the nations be blessed," Gen. 12:3. This means that all the nations are now under the curse, that God is angry at all nations, and that they all are oppressed by sin and death. But the time is coming when through the Seed of Abraham they shall again be freed from these evils. The apostles interpreted this promise in this way, as is evident from the Book of Acts and from Paul.

Furthermore, in this same account of Abraham is added the idea of justification. God comforts Abraham by saying: "Do not be afraid; I am your Protector," Gen. 15:1. Then He adds the promise concerning the Seed, and Abraham believes this word, that is, although he sees and realizes that he is unclean and unworthy, yet he understands that he has a God who is favorable toward him for the sake of His own mercy and the promise of the Seed, and thus he is pronounced righteous. This example teaches that we obtain reconciliation through the promise and faith, for faith does not rely on our own worthiness but only on the mercy of God.

Gradually many other statements and examples followed concerning the remission of sins. The clearest statements are in the Psalms and the prophets. The Gospel is set forth very clearly in some of these. In the Psalms, David seeks forgiveness of his sins for the sake of God's mercy and not on the grounds of his own worthiness or merit; for example, "Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for no one living shall be justified in Your sight," Ps. 143:2. It is certainly not the preaching of the Law which seeks mercy and confesses sins; indeed, the Law condemns all, in order that we all may know that our sins are freely forgiven. Again, "If You should mark iniquities, O Lord, who will stand?" Ps. 130:3. Or, "I said I will confess against myself my unrighteousness, and You have forgiven the wickedness of my heart," Ps. 32:5. Or the passage which describes Christ as a priest, Ps. 110:4, "You are a priest forever," which testifies that this priest will propitiate God and restore eternal righteousness and eternal life, for it calls Him "a priest forever."

We must apply similar passages in the Psalms to this teaching concerning the gracious forgiveness of sins. For these lovely songs sing sweetly to us about this and bring us great comfort. If we believe that these promises depend upon our worthiness, when the Psalms command us to rejoice and trust in God's mercy, then our consciences would always remind us that we are unworthy and that these promises in no way apply to the unworthy. Therefore we must guard our minds against this doubt and be aware that these very words which command us to rejoice have been spoken in order that they may relieve this doubt which has arisen from our unworthiness.

If we believe that reconciliation has been freely promised to us, then faith will be certain and we will rejoice in God's mercy and give Him thanks. But so great is the weakness and frailty of the human mind that it cannot grasp the greatness of this mercy. We are so burdened down under work-righteousness and the judgment of the Law that we cannot be persuaded that the Gospel freely offers mercy to all. Therefore faith must always struggle with this weakness of ours in order that we may take courage and learn to trust in God and truly invoke and worship Him.

In Isaiah there are many statements which deal with Christ, the remission of sins, and eternal life. Chapter 53 clearly bears witness to the promise of the remission of sins for the sake of Christ and not because of our own worthiness. The Lord "has laid upon Him the iniquities of us all," v. 6. And lest the Jews get the idea that they merited the remission of their sins by reason of the Levitical sacrifices, Isaiah testifies that there is still another sacrifice by which sin is truly absolved: "He shall make His soul an offering for sin," v. 10. Again, He condemns all, for he says, "All we like sheep have gone astray," v. 6, in order that we know that we have received the benefits of Christ because of His mercy and not because of our own worthiness. And finally he adds the clearest testimony of all, "By His knowledge He shall justify many," v. 11. This means

that we must definitely establish the fact that we are pronounced righteous if we confess Christ, that is, if we confess that God is favorable toward us for the sake of Christ. Therefore there must be no doubt regarding our own unworthiness and no feeling that we are righteous because of the Law. But I shall cite no more testimonies, for I have cited these for the sake of example so that the readers can see in Scripture which passages are speaking properly of the Law and which properly of the Gospel, and thus can note the difference between the Law and the promise of the Gospel. For these two particular loci are the chief teaching of Scripture, to which all parts of Scripture must be wisely compared.

Thus far, we have described the Gospel and shown the difference between the Law and the Gospel. But all this will be illustrated when we speak of justification, faith, and works. Now only one part, as it were, needs to be added, namely this: just as it is necessary to know that the Gospel is a gracious and free promise, so also it is necessary to know that the Gospel is a universal promise, that is, that reconciliation is offered and promised to all people.

We must retain this universal promise against dangers we might imagine regarding predestination, so that we do not argue that this promise pertains only to a certain few others, but not to ourselves. There is no doubt that this thought troubles the minds of all people. From this have arisen many useless controversies by writers on the subject of predestination. But we must make up our minds that the promise of the Gospel is universal. For just as the preaching of repentance is universal, so also is the preaching of the remission of sins universal. Under this heading belong the various statements of Scripture pertaining to the universality of the Gospel, such as John 3:16: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish . . ." Likewise in Paul, "God has imprisoned all under sin that He might have mercy upon all" [Rom. 11:32; cf. Gal. 3:22]. This is sufficient instruction for the moment. But below, under the locus on predestination, we must speak again regarding this universal promise.

That not all obtain the Gospel promise comes from the fact that they do not all believe. For the Gospel, even though it promises freely, yet requires faith; it is necessary that the promise be received by faith. The term "freely" does not exclude faith, but it does exclude our worthiness as a condition, as we have said above; and it demands that we accept the promise, and this cannot take place except through faith.

Locus 8
Grace and Justification

This locus contains the sum and substance of the Gospel. It shows the benefit of Christ in the proper sense, it offers a firm comfort to pious minds, it teaches the true worship of God, true invocation, and it especially distinguishes the church of God from other people—the Jews, the Mohammedans, and the Pelagians, that is, from all who imagine that man is righteous by the Law or by discipline and who want us to be in doubt regarding the remission of our sins. There is great dissension of opinions about this subject, for many follow human judgments and neglect the simple teaching of the prophets, Christ, and the apostles. They change this teaching into a philosophy, minimize the sin in our nature, and believe that only discipline is required by the law of God. From here they go on to imagine that there is no difference between the teaching of the philosophers and that of Christ.

In all periods of history these ungodly and human fabrications have obscured the true doctrine of the church. For example, the Pharisees believed that they were righteous by the Law. Then, because it became necessary to ask why the Messiah was going to come, they dreamed up the idea that He was going to come to establish His rule over the world, not understanding that He had to become a sacrifice for the human race in order to satisfy the wrath of God against sin and that another kind of righteousness was going to be given to men. Even before the Pharisees, hypocrites in the church in the period of the patriarchs had believed the same things.

But the prophets attacked these errors and cried that sin is not taken away by the righteousness of the Law, that sin still remains in this mortal nature of ours, but that believers are righteous, their prayers are heard, and eternal life is given to them by God because of the promised Savior (cf. Ps. 143:2; 2:11; Is. 53:11). Thus, when Christ and the apostles revived this teaching, immediately human opinions regarding discipline began to be spread abroad, because it is something great to govern external morals. As a result, fanatical spirits arose who drastically changed the Gospel into Law, or Pharisaism, and imagined that people are righteous by the Law. Lest Christ seem to have brought in nothing new, they said that He handed down some new laws regarding celibacy and not taking revenge.

These ridiculous notions were spawned immediately after the apostles. It is no wonder that darkness also followed. Although some godly people did retain the true understanding, yet there was a great difference among writers, with one speaking more accurately than another. But we shall speak elsewhere regarding these writers. At this point I only want to say as a preface that the pious reader should understand that it is necessary to explain this locus of justification and with a grateful mind receive this blessing of God which the light of the Gospel has again restored.

It cannot be denied that there were errors in the teaching of the monks, and although they have corrected some of them, their substance remains. In regard to the remission of sins they still vociferously assert that it is not correct to teach that remission of sins is received by faith, freely, for the sake of Christ, and they do not admit that the term "by faith" means to trust in the mercy of God. Indeed, they want us always to be in doubt as to whether we are in grace. Then they add that we merit the remission of sins because of contrition and love. When they speak of a contrition or sorrow or shame which is without trust in God's mercy, the stronger it is the more it drives a person to despair, as Paul says: "The Law works wrath" [Rom. 4:15].

Then they say, further, that the regenerate satisfy the law of God and are righteous because of their fulfillment of the Law, and that this very thing is a merit and the reward is eternal life, and that in the regenerate there is no remaining disobedience in conflict with the law of God. They add that the regenerate still must be in doubt as to whether they are in grace, and they must remain in this doubt.

This kind of doubt is plainly heathenish. Nor are these errors only minor matters, but rather they cast darkness over the Gospel, hide the benefits of Christ, take away true comfort of conscience, and destroy true prayer. Therefore it is necessary that the church be warned about these important matters. For this reason I shall explain the sum of this matter as clearly and plainly as possible.

First. In regard to discipline, we loudly proclaim that all human beings must be trained by discipline, that is, by that righteousness which even the unregenerate must and can produce. As Paul says, "The Law was laid down for the unrighteous" [1 Tim. 1:9]. And God punishes the violation of discipline with temporal and eternal punishments. It is a great proclamation of discipline when Paul says: "The Law is our schoolmaster unto Christ" [Gal. 3:24], because the Gospel is not effective in those who do not cease to go against conscience.

Although no human activity is more beautiful than discipline, as Aristotle correctly says: "Righteousness is more lovely than the evening or morning star," yet we must not accept the notion that it is the fulfillment of the Law, that it merits remission of sins, and that because of it a person is righteous, that is, reconciled with God. Paul says that the Jews look upon the face of Moses under a veil [2 Cor. 3:13], that is, not correctly

understanding the law of God, which is a voice condemning sin in man's nature and showing God's wrath against sin and arousing true terrors.

When the Gospel speaks of this understanding of the Law and the knowledge of sin, many people who are puffed up with their own wisdom think that these are Stoic exaggerations for which we have no need. Since discipline in itself is a sufficiently difficult matter, they contend that nothing further is required and that this degree of diligence merits the remission of sins and is righteousness before God. Origen and the monks have badly distorted Paul in order to favor these human notions. Therefore we must learn the true meaning of Paul from Paul himself and from the consensus of the rest of the prophetic and apostolic Scripture, and not from human opinions.

Second. After we have given this caution regarding discipline, we must now turn to the matter itself. The message of the church is the same from the beginning, after it was received by Adam, down to the end of time. The ministry of preaching repentance was instituted immediately in Paradise [Gen. 3:15], and the promise of the coming Liberator was given, which our first parents understood they had received. This promise was gradually more fully revealed, down to the preaching of Christ, who also Himself performed this ministry. To the apostles He committed the same ministry, saying: "Preach repentance and remission of sins in My name" [Luke 24:47].

Thus in the church the preaching of repentance must always sound forth. It is the voice of the Law through which God condemns our sins, both outward and inward, which are that we do not fear, do not love God, do not trust in God. The voice of the Gospel also is sounded, accusing the world because it does not listen to the Son of God, is not moved by His suffering and resurrection, etc. Therefore Christ says: "The Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin because they do not believe," John 16:8–9. Cf. Rom. 1:18: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" [KJV].

Thus Adam (or David), upon hearing the voice of God accusing, since his mind was not hard or stubborn, grew terrified and acknowledged that God was really angry against sin and would punish sin. These terrors are often described in the Psalms (cf. Ps. 38:3). Indeed, just as the Law declares this anger to the human race, so all calamities of mankind are in a sense the voice of the Law admonishing us regarding the wrath of God and calling all to repentance.

Third. When the mind of man becomes terrified by this voice condemning sin, it hears the promise given in the Gospel and determines that its sins are freely remitted for the sake of Christ through mercy, not because of contrition or love or any other works. In this way, when the mind raises itself up by faith, remission of sins and reconciliation are given. For if the judgment must be made that we will have remission of sins only when our contrition and love are sufficient, our mind will be driven to despair. Thus, in order that our mind might have certain and firm comfort, the blessing of God does not depend upon the condition of our worthiness but only on the mercy promised for the sake of Christ. And when God forgives sins, at the same time He gives us the Holy Spirit, who begins new powers in the godly, as it says in Gal. 3:22: ". . . that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

These points are not complicated and are clearly understood by godly minds in the church that are acquainted with spiritual exercises, anxieties, comforts, and prayer. Therefore we must now bring forward some passages from Scripture, but the terminology must first be carefully explained.

We have spoken previously regarding sin and the Law, but now we shall speak of some other matters, such as the words "justification," "faith," and "grace."

"Justification" means the remission of sins, reconciliation, or the acceptance of a person unto eternal life. To the Hebrews "to justify" is a forensic term, as if I were to say that the Roman people "justified" Scipio when he was accused by the tribunes, that is, they absolved him or pronounced him to be a righteous man. Therefore Paul took the term "justify" from the usage of the Hebrew word to indicate remission of sins, reconciliation, or acceptance. All educated people understand that this is the thrust of the Hebrew expression, and examples are encountered frequently.

Although, as we have said above, when God remits sins He at the same time gives the Holy Spirit, who begins new powers within us, yet the terrified mind first seeks the remission of sins and reconciliation. About this it is troubled; about this it struggles in true terrors. It makes no argument over which powers are infused; even if these accompany reconciliation, yet we must never reach the conclusion that our worthiness or purity are the cause for the remission of our sins. For this reason we must strongly stress the term "freely."

The Word *Faith*

We must carefully consider the term "faith" and see what Paul is doing when he says that we are not justified by our works but by faith in Christ. This is new language to Roman ears, and we must at the very beginning seek the genuine and simple interpretation of it. To be justified by works means to obtain forgiveness of sins and to be righteous or accepted before God by reason of our own virtues or deeds. On the other hand, to be justified by faith in Christ means to obtain remission of sins, to be counted as righteous, that is, accepted by God, not because of our own virtues but for the sake of the Mediator, the Son of God. When we understand this word this way, then we can see how this proposition that we are justified by faith, which is the voice of the Gospel, is used by Paul in opposition

to the other concept, which is the voice of human reason or the Law, that we are justified by works. As the Baptist cries, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," John 1:29, so Paul wants to present this doctrine to us, and he teaches that remission of sins and reconciliation are given to us for the sake of the Son of God and not for the sake of our virtues.

Thus, when he says that we are justified by faith, he wants you to behold the Son of God sitting at the right hand of the Father as the Mediator who intercedes for us, and to understand that your sins are forgiven you because you are considered or pronounced just, that is, accepted, for the sake of His own Son, who was the Sacrifice. Therefore, in order that the word "faith" may point to this Mediator and apply to us, "faith" refers not only to historical knowledge but also to trust (*fiducia*) in the mercy promised for the sake of the Son of God.

Thus, this statement that we are righteous by faith must always be understood as correlative, that is, connected with being righteous by trusting that we have been received by mercy for the sake of Christ, and not because of our virtues. This mercy is laid hold on by faith or trust. Paul says this in order that he may present to us this Mediator and Lamb, take away from us our glorying in our own righteousness, and testify that we have been received by God for the sake of this Propitiator.

There is no doubt that this is Paul's thinking, and it is absolutely clear in the church that his opinion is correct and true. All the saints confess that even if they have new virtues, yet they do not receive remission of sin or reconciliation because of them but only for the sake of the Son of God, the Propitiator. Therefore we must understand the statement, "By faith we have remission," to mean that by this trust we are received for the sake of God's Son.

But there are those who reply to this discussion that it is absolutely ridiculous and meaningless to say that "having been justified by faith we have peace with God," Rom. 5:1. They do not understand what it is to have a struggle of conscience with fears and doubts, when one is anxious about the remission of his sins; and they do not know the tremblings which take place in true repentance. If they would consider these things they would know that terrified hearts seek consolation outside themselves, and this consolation is the trust with which the will rests in the promise of mercy given for the sake of the Mediator. Faith embraces both trust in the mercy of God and knowledge of the historical events, that is, it looks to Christ, of whom it is necessary to know that He is the Son of the eternal God, crucified for us, raised again, etc. The historical facts must be applied to the promise or the effect of His work, as it is set forth in this article, namely: "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." Again this article warns that faith must be understood as trust. For to him who does not trust that his sins are forgiven him, the words, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins" are useless.

I have been speaking in regard to the understanding of the proposition: "We are justified by faith," and now I will add testimonies to show that faith in the doctrine of the Gospel means trust in the mercy promised for the sake of Christ. Some argue about the word "faith" (*pistis*) and will allow no other understanding than that it is a statement of doctrine, a profession of a creed, as when we popularly say that the Nicene faith is our doctrine or collection of dogmas. But it is evident that to the Greeks the word "believe" (*pisteuō*) has several different meanings. And there is no doubt that the Hebrew uses interchangeably the words which mean to believe and to trust, as we see in Ps. 2:12: "Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him." Here the Hebrew has the word *chasah.* When Paul [Rom. 9:33] cites Is. 28:16, "He that believes shall not be confounded," the word in Hebrew is *aman.* The same word, which means "believe," is often used with the meaning of "trust" in the Hebrew, as in Dan. 6:23: ". . . because he trusted in His God." In Ps. 78:22 two synonymous words are used together: "Because they did not believe [*aman*] in God or trust [*batach*] in His salvation." There are also clear statements in the words of Christ: "O woman, great is your faith," Matt. 15:28; and again: "Your faith has made you whole," Matt. 9:22. In these and similar passages it is evident that by the term "faith" *(fides)* is meant "trust" (*fiducia*).

There is no doubt that Paul follows the Hebrew usage. There are also countless examples among the Greeks where the word *pisteuō* (believe) simply means to trust in something, as it occurs in the popular verse of Phocylides: "Do not put your trust (*pisteue, credas*) in the people, for the multitude is deceitful."

In his fourth Philippic, Demosthenes says, "But if he puts his trust (*pisteuei*) in the goodwill of his allies, he also builds up his armaments." And in his *Contra Androtionem* he says, "Put your confidence in yourself" (*sautō pisteueis*). And in Plutarch, when Solon is asked in what he would put his trust when daring to oppose Pisistratus, and he replies that [he trusts in] growing old, here the word for "trust" is *tini pisteuōn.* It is not hard to pile up a large heap of testimonies.

Let us therefore retain the force of the word *pisteuō* (to believe) and understand that it means both to assent to something and to put trust in something. The Greeks were very wide-ranging in their use of the word *pistis* (faith). But we should understand that in the church it means a firm assent and also confidence or trust, which is also called *pepoithēsis* (a persuasion or belief). This definition of faith is a true one: Faith (*fides*) is assenting to the entire Word of God as it is given to us, particularly to the free promise of reconciliation given for the sake of Christ the Mediator, and it is trust (*fiducia*) in the mercy of God promised for the sake of Christ the Mediator. For trust is an action of the will which of necessity responds to the assent, or an action

by which the will rests in Christ. When this takes place, it is illuminated by the Holy Spirit and by new light, as shall be described later.

It is common to use the word *pistis* (faith) for a firm assent, the opposite of an uncertain opinion. Plato says that human beings do not have a steadfast or stable assent (*pistis*) to the idea of the good. For although people understand the right, yet because of the stubbornness of their heart and their corrupted desire, their assent is minimized.

Similar in meaning is the word "trust" (*fiducia*), as we see in the verse from Theognis: "I lost my property because of my trust (*pistis*), and I saved it by my distrust (*apistia*)." And in Hesiod both trust and distrust are deadly. But there are other meanings, the most important of which is that *pistis* is the equivalent of fidelity, that is, it is a term to describe the virtue of keeping a treaty. Where this meaning has a place in the sacred writings it must be diligently considered. For in judging ecclesiastical controversies where we are seeking the correct meaning of the words in a certain passage, we must look at the parallel meanings. The study of languages is important for this purpose.

As I have said, the word *pistis* often means "fidelity" or "faithfulness," as in the verse of Sophocles: "Faithfulness (*pistis*) dies and unfaithfulness (*apistia*) germinates," or "faithfulness perishes." It is used in this way often in other places, as in Polybius, Bk. 2: "They distinguished themselves by their faithfulness (*pistis*) in keeping the treaty," or, to say the same thing, by the "faith," that is, the reputation attributed to them, that they were faithful, just, and men of goodwill in keeping the treaty. There are many derived meanings from this, which do not pertain to Paul's point. Polybius said, "They gave themselves into the faithfulness (*pistin*) of the Romans," that is, into the assurance that the Romans would keep the treaty and would exercise moderation and kindness. Likewise, "to give faith" (*dounai pisteis*) means "to promise fidelity." In the orators and Aristotle *pisteis* refers to proofs, arguments, and testimonies. But these do not relate to the argument Paul is making.

Sad to say, the church almost, as it says in the Greek verse, learned to speak the native tongue among barbarians. The monks overturned the true meanings of the word and thought up a new kind of doctrine. For this reason godly people must go back to the prophets and the apostles and again learn the proper language of the church and restore it. That Paul wants trust in the mercy of God to be understood by the word "faith" is clear from the passages we shall discuss. In Rom. 4:16 the promise is related to faith in a correlative sense: "It is freely by faith, that . . . the promise might be sure." Here Paul clearly asserts that we should give assent to the promise; and in order that we might be able to assent, he says that it is free, for if the condition of fulfilling the Law were added, then despair would follow at the statement: "You will please God if you satisfy the Law." But Paul says that the promise is free, so that it might be firm for the believer. Therefore he wants us to assent to the promise. This assent is really this trust which lays hold on the promise. This explanation is unassailable.

[I.] Further, we must consider the power of the Gospel promise, for if there is no need for assent, then the promise is an absolutely useless noise. However, it has been given in order that we should assent to it; and so that we can assent to it, it is free. Likewise, why does John say: "He who does not believe God has made Him a liar" [1 John 5:10]? And Paul says: "Abraham did not waver in distrust, but with firm faith and giving glory to God he was sure . . ." [Rom. 4:20]. These passages clearly show that it is required that we assent to the promise. Finally, why does this word ring out in the church: "For the sake of the Son of God your sins are remitted to you," if you say that assent is not required? What else is this than, as John says, calling God a liar?

II. Rom. 5:1: "Justified by faith, we have peace . . ." But the historical knowledge of this matter does not bring peace; indeed, it only increases our trembling and hopelessness, as is the case with the devils [James 2:19]. For what could be a more terrible sign of the wrath of God than that He could not be satisfied with any sacrifice except the death of His own Son? The devils see that they have been rejected; they know that the Son of God has been made their judge and they will suffer eternal punishments. And men in true terrors see not only the many other signs of God's wrath against sin, such as death and other incalculable calamities, but they see also this sign, that God cannot be placated except through His Son. The historical knowledge of this only increases our anxieties, if our faith is not a trust and confidence that applies this blessing to us—if it is not established that the Son of God suffered in order that there might be forgiveness for you, even though you have been undeserving, etc. This trust comforts the terrified mind and brings it peace.

III. The explanation of many other passages is similar—for example: "The just shall live by faith" [Hab. 2:4]. It is certain that no one shall live merely by historical knowledge of this fact, for this only increases torment. Nor shall anyone live by knowledge of the Law: "If you have sufficient virtues, you will please God." Thus it is necessary that faith be understood as that which assures us that God is favorable toward us and as that which rests in the promises of mercy. We must understand the following passage in the same way: "Everyone who believes in Him will not be put to shame" [Rom. 9:33]. Likewise Ps. 2:12: "Kiss the Son. . . . Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him" [KJV]. Here the Hebrew word has the very appropriate meaning of "to confide, to trust."

IV. Eph. 3:12: "In Him and through our faith in Him we dare to approach God confidently." Here Paul describes the nature of faith by three very significant

words: "we dare," "to approach," and "confidently." It is a great thing to approach God as the Judge who is truly and horribly angry at sin. Here again the mere historical knowledge deters us, unless we have determined that the Son is our Leader and Propitiator and that through Him we are led to the Father. This acknowledgment is the trust of which we have been speaking. Likewise, Rom. 5:2 says: "Through Him we have access by faith. . . ." And Heb. 4:14, 16: "Having such a high priest . . . let us come with confidence to the throne of grace." From this passage we learn both that this confidence is presupposed in prayer and that "faith" in similar passages must be understood as "confidence."

But many cry out in opposition because they do not understand this very worship of God, namely faith, as being involved in prayer, and they imagine that there is no sin in doubting whether we are received by God or heard by Him. But how great a sin this is and how harmful to us is seen when there is a genuine spiritual struggle, because it rejects the promise of God and calls Him a liar.

Acts 15:9: ". . . purifying their hearts by faith." If faith only refers to knowledge, such as even the devils have, this statement would be utterly inane. But it is evident in this very passage that that argument pertains to justification, and it is established beyond debate that hearts are not purified by the righteousness of the Law, but in another way, namely, "if they believe that they will be saved through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" [v. 11].

We can add a mountain of testimonies in which the word "faith" is used to denote "trust," such as: "O woman, great is your faith!" [Matt. 15:28]. Again in Luke 7:50: "Your faith has saved you." 2 Chron. 20:20: "Believe . . . and you will be established." In statements of this kind it is apparent that "faith" is called a trust that expects consolation and help from God; regardless of how different the outward circumstances are, yet the first and chief object of faith is always a reconciled God, according to the promise of reconciliation. Then David prays for and expects help in war, when he has determined that he has a God who is favorable toward him. So great a variety of outward objects and perils surrounds us that there is an opportunity to exercise our faith and at the same time to grasp the spiritual blessings, as that common prayer teaches us. For after we have said, "Give us this day our daily bread," the prayer immediately continues, "and forgive us our trespasses." Our mind in seeking material things would flee from God unless at the very same time it understood that we are forgiven, that we have been received into grace and thus are heard and protected.

To understand many passages it is useful to consider that faith regarding reconciliation often becomes evident in prayers and hopes for physical things. Thus Abraham sought an heir from God, and he believed the promise which assured him of posterity. But at the same time Abraham realized and was confident that he was forgiven by God, that, although unworthy, he was received by God through mercy for the sake of the Liberator who had been promised to the fathers. The promise and comfort which precede testify that this is the force of "he believed" in Gen. 15:6; cf. Gen. 15:1: "Fear not, Abraham, I am your Protector and your very great Reward." In this most sweetly comforting passage God bears witness that He is favorable toward Abraham, that He is his Defender, His Helper, and Savior. In looking at this promise Abraham trusts that he is received into the grace of God. Therefore concerning this faith it is said that "it was imputed to him for righteousness," Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3.

Finally, the definition of faith given in the Epistle to the Hebrews [11:1] testifies that the word "faith" means "trust" when it says: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for." It is evident to those who understand the language that the word "substance" (*hypostasis*) refers to something hoped for, that is, an expectant trust.

I have reviewed testimonies from the prophets and apostles which are clear and which I hope will satisfy those who are skillful in judging. But I must confess that later many writers, such as Origen and others, have taught another kind of doctrine, an inadequate one; but some of the more learned agreed with us on the substance, although also they in some places spoke very well and in other places rather unfortunately.

In Augustine from time to time there are some excellent statements. In his *De Spiritu et Litera* [30, MPL 44.233] he says, "By the Law we fear God; by faith (*fides*) we flee to Him for mercy." Again, faith (*fides*) says: "Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you" [ibid.]. If these statements are correctly understood, they cannot be applied to anything except to trust (*fiducia*) in God's mercy.

Even clearer is the statement of Augustine regarding Ps. 32:1 [*Enarratio in Psalmum 31, MPL 36.262*], "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven." He says, "Who are the blessed? They are not those in whom no sin is found, for it is found in all; for 'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.' Therefore if sins are found in all, it remains that they are not blessed unless their sins have been remitted. Therefore the apostle says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness.' " Here certainly Augustine understands *fides* as *fiducia,* the trust by which a person receives the forgiveness of sins. And he clearly understands the statement in Gen. 15:6 and of Paul in Rom. 4:3 as we have interpreted them.

I will also add the testimony of Bernard [*Sermo 1,* MPL 183.383–84] which is found in his sermon on the Annunciation. He says that it is necessary first of all to believe that you cannot have the remission of sins except through the kindness of God; but he adds that you must believe also this, that by Him sins are forgiven you. This is the testimony which the Holy Spirit gives

to your heart, saying:"Your sins are forgiven you." For the apostle believes that man is justified freely through faith. In this statement we have a clear and concise position of the belief of our churches. And similar testimonies are extant in the writings of this author.

Basil also very correctly states our position in his *Sermon on Humility* [MPL 31.529], regarding the passage "Let him who glories, glory in the Lord." He says, "Christ is made unto us wisdom from God, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, as it written, 'He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.' For this is the perfect and complete glorying in God, when a person does not bring forward the offering of his own righteousness but recognizes that he needs the true righteousness and that he is justified by faith alone in Christ."

Finally, let us consider the matter itself. The voice of the Gospel is better understood in the circumstances of immediate struggle than when, as wicked and secure men, we listen to long disputations. How do you comfort yourself when your mind is really overrun with anxiety and fear of God's wrath? Must you not in this consternation flee to Christ the Mediator and say to yourself, "I truly believe that you are forgiven for the sake of this Victim!" Just as the Gospel everywhere orders us to believe that the Son of God died for our sins, as it says in Rom. 4:24–25, so we must consider also this: Through the Son is access to God, Rom. 5:2. Also, this faith by which you are comforting yourself is undoubtedly the trust which rests in the Son of God. Certainly one must not think like this: "I already love God, I already have the virtues and merits; therefore God will receive me." So we who see this struggle and this comfort understand that these anxieties do exist and that our minds are raised up by the trust which looks to the Son of God, and we will want to speak these things with whatever words we can, but the prophets and apostles used the term "faith" in this matter.

In the same way all godly people consider their daily prayer, that as often as you begin to invoke God your many-faceted unworthiness gets in the way and your fears prevent your prayers. Is any comfort to be found here? Certainly you must not think: "I already have virtues worthy to make my prayers acceptable." But you look to the Mediator who has been given for us. You think of the passage: "Come to Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" [Matt. 11:28]. Or: "Whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you" [John 15:16]. Likewise Heb. 7:25: "He always lives to make intercession for them." Therefore you believe that your prayer is pleasing to God and is received, on account of this High Priest who makes intercession along with you. To believe this is certainly trust which raises up and comforts the mind.

As we contend about this matter, about this comfort, we only desire to retain the content, regardless of what words others may use. Those who differ obstruct the content itself, destroy it, and order us always to be in doubt; they even bury Christ, because they absolutely will not teach people to seek comfort from Him or direct them to use His benefits. For if faith is not the trust that looks to Christ and finds rest because of Him, then certainly we will not apply His benefits to ourselves or use them. Therefore it is necessary that by *faith* we understand the *trust* that applies to us the benefits of Christ.

Thus when we say that we are justified by faith, we are saying nothing else than that for the sake of the Son of God we receive remission of sins and are accounted as righteous. And because it is necessary that this benefit be taken hold of, this is said to be done "by faith," that is, by trust in the mercy promised us for the sake of Christ. Thus we must also understand the correlative expression, "We are righteous by faith," that is, through the mercy of God for the sake of His Son we are righteous or accepted. We know the nature of the related terms, such as love, fear, and other terms, which are the names for the emotions relating to what we have said. Such a term is "trust." Nor am I intimidated by any of the foolish criticisms leveled against this term by unlearned men.

Some people object that to this trust must be joined love. I do not contend against this, but when we say that we are justified by faith, we point to the Son of God sitting at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us; and we say that because of Him reconciliation is given to us, and we take away the merit of reconciliation from our own good works, whatever they may be.

To summarize, when we are criticized for saying in this dogma that a person is justified by faith, we are only being criticized for saying that we receive reconciliation for the sake of the Son of God and not because of our worthiness.We must believe this as well as that the benefit must be laid hold on by this faith or trust, and the merit of Christ must be put up against our sin and damnation. In this faith or trust, which looks to the Son of God, God is to be invoked. It is absolutely certain that these statements are the very voice of the Gospel and the perpetual consensus of the true church. Nor do I doubt that good and pious people have known this explanation as Paul's correct teaching and have clung to it with a grateful mind. Concerning this entire matter I appeal to the consensus of the church, that is, of the skilled and pious. I judge that the testimony of that church carries the greatest weight.

Many others insanely cry and contend that by the word "faith" nothing is meant except the historical knowledge, and they look for countless arguments to prove their point. But the godly remember the voice of Paul, who says in Rom. 9:31: "Israel pursued the righteousness which is based on law but did not succeed in fulfilling the Law." Human reason understands the righteousness of works and marvels at it, but the things said regarding the righteousness of faith it strongly hates, because they are foreign to civil matters. We

should know that the righteousness of works has its place, but in seeking reconciliation there is need for a far different consolation.

I have made these brief remarks regarding the word "faith," which are uncomplicated and unsophisticated and in agreement with Hebrew terminology. Therefore let this be the definition of "faith": [1] Faith is to assent to the entire Word of God as it has been set forth for us, [2] and particularly to the free promise of reconciliation given for the sake of Christ the Mediator. [3] And it is trust in the mercy of God promised for the sake of Christ the Mediator. [4] For trust is an action or movement of the will which necessarily responds to assent. [5] Faith is also the power of laying hold on the promises and applying them to oneself. [6] It quiets the heart, as these words teach clearly enough: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through . . . Christ, by whom we also have access by faith to this grace . . ." [Rom. 5:1–2]. But when we speak of assenting to the promise, we include the knowledge of all the articles. In the creed all the other articles are related to this statement: "I believe . . . in the forgiveness of sins . . . and the life everlasting." This is the sum of the promises and the goal to which the other articles relate. For the Son of God was sent, as John tells us, "that He might destroy the works of the devil" [1 John 3:8], that is, take away sin and restore righteousness and eternal life.

The Word *Grace*

Even the philosophers saw that outstanding virtue cannot exist without divine motivation, as in the case of the bravery of Alexander, which they believed was caused by divine impulse. Following this idea, the monks understood grace only in the sense of new virtues or powers stimulated by the Holy Spirit. When it is said that we receive the remission of sins through grace, they interpreted this to mean that remission is received on account of these virtues. This interpretation is in direct conflict with Paul. Likewise in regard to faith or trust in Christ, or trust in the free imputation, they had nothing to say. Their notion was in large part a philosophic concept and obscured the benefit of Christ and the doctrine of free imputation. Therefore the word "grace" in the true, correct, and proper sense of the word means much more than this.

In Romans 5 there are two terms: "grace" and "the gift through grace." "Grace" is the free remission of sins, or mercy, or free acceptance. "The gift through grace," then, means the giving of the Holy Spirit and eternal life, that is, the new and eternal righteousness and life which begins here in this life and is brought to completion hereafter. This is the way John speaks in 1:17: "The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" [KJV]. Here also "grace" means the free remission of sins, or acceptance for the sake of the Mediator. "Truth," then, is the true light, that is, the true knowledge of God, true and eternal righteousness and life, which begins in this world but is completed hereafter. This is said in regard to the entire benefit of Christ, as if to say: You have indeed heard the Law, but it does not take away sin nor the blindness in our minds, that is, the doubts concerning God and our raging against God as our Judge. Likewise, the Law does not bring true and eternal righteousness, but only the outward discipline which dies with us, which is not eternal or durable or perpetual righteousness.

But through the Messiah these marvelous gifts are given: first, grace, that is, the free remission of sins and the imputation of righteousness. Then also truth, that is, the true light, the knowledge of God, and true and eternal righteousness and life. Therefore, although the word "grace" means the remission of sins or the free mercy of God, yet we also confess that the gift of the Holy Spirit is added, and with a clear testimony we condemn the error of Pelagius, who absolutely did away with the distinction between philosophy and the Gospel and devised the notion that in philosophy men could also without the Holy Spirit satisfy the law of God, that this outward discipline is the righteousness of the Gospel, and that there is no need for the gift of the Holy Spirit. We condemn these ravings because it is a certainty that there is a need here for the beginning of the new and everlasting life, which cannot take place without the Holy Spirit, as the heavenly voice cries out over and over again in the Gospel and the prophets.

Therefore let this be the definition of "grace": Grace is the remission of sins, or the mercy promised for the sake of Christ, or the free acceptance which necessarily accompany the giving of the Holy Spirit.

Nor is it difficult to judge regarding this word, whose Hebrew usage is known. The Hebrew word often means "favor," at times also "gift." Now I shall add some testimonies which bear witness to the fact that "grace" in this context refers particularly to free mercy or free reconciliation. Rom. 4:4: "Now to him who works, his wages are not reckoned according to grace." Here Paul clearly understands "grace" in the sense of free benevolence or imputation. For it is an antithesis: For those who work, there must be wages, but "to the one who believes," even if he brings no merit, nevertheless there is the free imputation of righteousness.

In the same way it is said later on: "It is from faith . . . according to grace, that the promise might be sure" [v. 16], that is, that the reconciliation might be certain. It does not depend on the condition of our own worthiness, but it is freely given. For if you judge that you have remission only if you are worthy and pure, then endless doubt and despair will follow.

Rom. 6:14: "You are not under the Law but under grace." Here Paul is dealing with this very thing, that we are pleasing to God for the sake of His Son, not because of our worthiness, since indeed great weakness and sin still cling to the regenerate. Therefore

"grace" means the free mercy promised because of the Son.

Rom. 5:20: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" [KJV]. Although sin has been condemned by the frightful wrath of God, which no creature can understand adequately, yet grace abounded, that is, the mercy promised for the sake of Christ, by which remission comes to us, along with reconciliation and grace, is much greater, that is, God wills that we trust in the promised mercy. Therefore we must not understand this passage as referring to our virtue or our obedience, in which we surely must not put our trust.

Likewise it says in Heb. 4:16: "Let us . . . come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" [KJV]. He understands the throne of grace to be the Mediator Himself, as though he were saying: "the throne which placates the wrath of the Father."

Since the Hebrew expression is well known to the learned, there is no need for a longer discussion. But this we must very diligently consider, that the exclusive particle "freely," often repeated by Paul, is included in the definition of grace. This exclusive particle means that reconciliation is given for the sake of the Son of God, the Mediator, and not because of our worthiness, not because of our merits, not because of our virtues or deeds. To be sure, this particle does not exclude the virtues themselves, but it does exclude them as a condition for worthiness or merit, and it transfers the cause of reconciliation solely to the Son of God. In Peter's confession [John 21:15–17] there had to be repentance and faith, by which a person knows that he is forgiven, and it is necessary that these virtues follow; and yet the proposition is true, and must be retained, that our sins are forgiven freely, that it was not because of Peter's virtues that his sins were forgiven, but because of the Son of God.

Because the correct understanding of this exclusive particle is so important, I shall set forth four reasons why we must retain and defend this matter. First, in order that the honor due to Christ is given to Him. Second, that the conscience may retain its sure and firm consolation, and the pestilential error of those who command us to doubt be destroyed. Third, that true prayer can be offered. Fourth, that the distinction between Law and Gospel may be observed. I shall discuss each of these causes briefly, so that we may keep them in mind at all times. Each of them must be carefully considered.

The first is this, that the honor due to Christ be given to Him. Those who transfer the cause of the remission of sins from Christ to our works sin doubly: (1) They mitigate the wrath of God and sin; and then, (2) They take away from the Son of God the honor due Him. For human blindness and self-security do not understand the enormity of the wrath of God against sin, and therefore this blindness imagines that this wrath can be assuaged by human discipline. Thus it embraces Christ as a teacher of this discipline, or as a legislator, but not as the Sacrifice for sin, although John the Baptist cries: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" [John 1:29]. And Isaiah says: "He gave His soul as an offering for sin, and He shall see His seed."

The second reason is that the conscience may have sure and firm consolation. Paul also teaches this in Rom. 4:16: "Therefore it is freely by faith . . . that the promise may be certain." This statement will be much clearer to the person who is undergoing the genuine struggle of a terrified mind. We know from the Law and from natural reason that God is good and merciful, but toward those who are not guilty. Therefore in true anxiety the mind does not ask whether God is merciful, but this is the torment of the struggle: whether He will forgive you who have been contaminated by sin and guilt, and for what price. Here it is necessary to hear the voice of the Gospel concerning the exclusive words and the Mediator, that God really wants to receive you freely, that is, not on account of your worthiness or merits, but for the sake of the Son of God.

This we must believe. If the exclusive words are ignored, doubt is strengthened; that is to say, if you think that your sins are not forgiven unless you have enough worthy contrition or love, doubt will cling to you, which sometimes produces contempt for God and at other times hatred and despair. This can easily be determined by godly people. For even if doubt is innate in the minds of men, yet we must know that we are not to have doubt about our reconciliation, for this reason: The Son of God has brought from the bosom of the eternal Father the clear and sure promise of reconciliation, to be put in opposition to the judgment of human reason, as it says in John 1:18: "The Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known to us."

Therefore doubt is to be rejected and faith must be encouraged, the faith that God truly wills to receive you for the sake of His Son and to hear your prayers. We must refute the impious error of our adversaries, who in their ignorance of the Gospel, and following only the judgment of human reason, command us to doubt; and they imagine that doubt is not a sin. This pernicious error must be removed, for it is surely a sin not to accept the promise. Likewise it is a sin not to attribute to God, when He makes this promise, the praise He deserves for being truthful, as John says in 1 John 5:10: "He who does not believe God makes Him a liar." It is the height of blasphemy to despise the voice which sounded from heaven: "Hear Him," Matt. 17:5.

The third reason arises out of the previous reasons and concerns prayer. We must distinguish between the prayer of the heathen and that of Christians. The heathen pray, but they are in doubt as to whether God respects and receives them and their prayers. So in the poems there are frequent complaints that those who are struck by calamities are not noticed or heard

by God. But in true sorrow, when the mind flees from an angry God, as Saul did, it surely does not call upon Him. On the other hand, the Gospel teaches the kind of prayer in which faith shines forth. And even if your unworthiness disturbs you as often as you begin your prayer, still faith looks to the Son of God, the Mediator, and assures you that your prayers are received for the sake of that High Priest, as it is written: "Whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you" [John 15:16]. Again: "Through Him we have access to God" [Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18].

Such prayer is proper for the true church but absolutely unknown to those who do not know the doctrine of free remission or of this exclusive particle "freely," of which Paul repeatedly speaks. Thus also Daniel prays in 9:18: "We do not pray in our own righteousness but in Your great mercy," for the Lord's sake. We do not wish by means of this exclusive particle to say more or teach anything different from what Daniel says. There are many examples in the Psalms which speak so sweetly to the godly, if we understand them as referring to free reconciliation. "With the Lord there is mercy" [Ps. 130:7]. If you add "toward the worthy," or "toward those who are sufficiently meritorious," that will be the voice of the Law striking terror. But if you understand this Psalm according to the Gospel, as Paul teaches and the psalmist feels—mercy receiving us freely for the sake of the Mediator—then this word brings comfort and calls the fleeing soul back to God and encourages it to true devotion.

The fourth reason is that we may clearly see the distinction between Law and Gospel, for even though the Law has a promise, yet it does not freely promise the remission of sins or reconciliation or imputation of righteousness, but pronounces only him righteous who offers complete obedience and is without sin, as these passages show: "Cursed is he who does not continue in all the things which are written in the Law" [Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10]; "He who does these things shall live by them" [Lev. 18:5; Gal. 3:12]. But the Gospel shows us the Son of God, the Mediator, and it proclaims to us that reconciliation is freely given to us for His sake.

Therefore the particle "freely" causes a very great difference between the Law and the Gospel. If this is lost, a great darkness must come over the Gospel. For as soon as the notion crept in that remission was given for the sake of our works—by the admission of this error the doctrine of faith, of the true honor of Christ, and of sure consolation of consciences went to ruin.

I have explained how important it is to retain the exclusive terminology, but we must also see that it is correctly understood. For when Paul says, "We obtain remission freely, by faith, for the sake of Christ," he does not thereby want to say that there should be no contrition in those who are converted or that the other virtues should not follow. Indeed, he wants them to be present. But he excludes the condition of our merit or worthiness; he denies that our contrition and virtues are causes for reconciliation, and he testifies that the real cause is the merit of Christ the Mediator. The meaning is that reconciliation is freely received by faith for the sake of the Son of God, and not for the sake of our own worthiness. These statements are clear, true, without any sophistry, and they contain nothing complicated, nothing intricate.

Nor are our theologians trying to say anything else when they say that we are justified by faith alone than what I have just said, namely that we attain the remission of sins freely, by faith for the sake of Christ, not by our own worthiness. Nor does the particle "alone" (*sola*) exclude contrition or the other virtues, as if they should not be present, but it denies that these things are the causes of reconciliation, and it transfers the cause to Christ alone. We must understand these expressions as being correlative: By faith (*fide*), that is, by our trust in Christ, we are righteous. In other words, we are righteous for the sake of Christ—freely, that is, not because of our own worthiness. We must believe this in order that we may lay hold on the benefit of Christ and find our rest in the mercy which has been promised for the sake of Christ.

Now I shall add some testimonies from Paul, showing that this is truly the doctrine of the Gospel which I have set forth concerning justification, namely that we must be sure that for the sake of the Son of God we freely, by faith, attain the remission of sins and are accounted as righteous, accepted by God unto eternal life. Further, it is beneficial for us to have these testimonies before us not only in order to refute our adversaries, but much more to strengthen ourselves and to build up our faith in all our invocation. For God particularly requires this worship and this work. This worship gives true honor to the Son of God, namely when we invoke God for the sake of this Victim and this Placator, and believe that through this High Priest our prayers are carried to the eternal Father.

In Romans 3 the substance of this discussion is treated in many words: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. But we are justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth as the Propitiator, through faith in His blood" [vv. 23–25]. At the beginning, in order that he might show that men are not righteous by their own purity, he says: "All are guilty and fall short of the glory of God," that is, the wisdom and the righteousness which God approves or considers as His glory. Then he goes on to add how we are to be reconciled, when he says that we are justified, that is, we attain the remission of sins and are accounted as righteous, or are received freely by His grace, that is, by His free mercy for the sake of Christ, whom God set forth as a propitiation. He adds that we are justified "in His blood," that is, the wrath of God is assuaged through the death of His Son.

But this benefit must be applied by faith. You

must understand that for the sake of this Propitiator, and for the sake of His death, God is favorable toward you, not because of your own worthiness. This faith is the trust or confidence which brings peace and life to our hearts, as we have said above in regard to faith; and it finds its rest in Christ.

Then Paul in Romans 4 undertakes to confirm this proposition and cites testimonies and arguments. The first testimony is taken from Gen. 15:6. In order to show that this has always been the doctrine of the church, he quotes the very first statement in existence regarding the method of justification, written by Moses. He also refers to that man who is set forth, in order that from him others may learn the promises and the true worship of God: "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness" [Rom. 4:3].

But here, before I add other arguments of Paul, we must refute certain criticisms by those who try to escape Paul's statements. For there are many profane men who treat Paul with contempt and cry that he is using irrelevant statements to support his position, and twisting them either through ignorance or sophistry, and for this reason they do not honor either Paul's writings or his authority. But these ungodly judgments arise from their own ignorance. Since they do not understand the struggles of faith that occur in the midst of real anxieties, it is not to be wondered at that they do not see how suitable are the statements from Paul here cited.

People are accustomed either to hate or proudly to condemn what they do not understand. But the pious know the voice of the apostle as the voice of God, which sounds from heaven and must be heard. They know that Paul is not playing tricks or speaking falsely but understands his own position and explains it correctly. They also know that the doctrine of Paul agrees with the writings of the prophets. Let us be the disciples of the apostles, not their detractors.

Moreover the adversaries, in order to escape the passages concerning faith, devise their own interpretation and say that there is a synecdoche here for the *fides formata,* as they themselves put it, that is, a faith that has joined to it various virtues that agree with its profession. Thus they understand faith as historical knowledge, and in reality they believe that man is not righteous by faith but by these other virtues.

But that this synecdoche conflicts with Paul himself can clearly be shown. For Paul over and over again repeats the particle "freely," that he might show that we do not achieve reconciliation because of our own virtues but for the sake of the Mediator. Thus he says "by faith" in order to urge us to keep our eyes on that Mediator and to convince us that for His sake and not because of our virtues we are the sons of God. These words clearly conflict with the synecdoche of our adversaries.

Further, their synecdoche yields endless doubt. You please God if you have sufficient merits. But also this doctrine of doubt is in clear opposition to the teaching of Paul: "Justified by faith, we have peace with God" [Rom. 5:1]. Doubt brings hopelessness and hatred of God.

We have said these things by way of prefacing the other testimonies, because in them is expressly contained the exclusive particle "freely," refuting the synecdoche. Likewise, we have mentioned that faith conflicts with doubt. Nor have we made up any interpretation for Paul, but we retain the proper meaning of his language, not subjecting the literal word to criticism or fanaticism, having studied the entire argument, having compared all the epistles of Paul, having compared even the sayings of the prophets, and finally having compared the judgment of the true church as to how it understood the doctrine of the remission of sins and the exercise of faith.

Our adversaries admit that they depart from the words, because they say that "by faith" means "by faith which is formed," that is, not by faith but by other virtues; and they brag that they know the "mind" of Paul. But since their interpretation is without doubt opposed to Paul himself, it has to be removed and repudiated; for every sophistry must be removed from our whole life, and especially from the doctrine that deals with God. Therefore let us in good faith retain those teachings that God has given through His prophets and apostles, and we shall properly and precisely explain them.

What can be said that is plainer and simpler than this? Even if there must be repentance in our hearts, yet we must firmly hold that we are received by God not on account of our virtues but for the sake of the Son of God, the Mediator, and that in this way we please God. What is so absurd about this statement? It demands that good works be present, and yet it transfers the cause of our reconciliation over to Christ, it attributes to Christ the honor due Him, and it shows pious hearts their firm consolation. On the other hand, the interpretation of the adversaries contains many obvious errors.

It embraces two absurdities: It commands men to be in perpetual doubt concerning the remission of their sins, and in the meantime it says that men earn remission by their own worthiness. Thus it takes away from Christ the honor due Him, and the conscience is left in doubt. This is clearly a heathenish notion. For there is no difference between Paul and Atticus, if both have equal doubt as to whether God regards them or hears their prayers; indeed, the adversaries say repeatedly that this doubt is not a sin. Further, they say that the regenerate are righteous by reason of their own worthiness, and that sin is not that inner darkness of the mind, doubts about the providence of God and reconciliation with Him, or the stubbornness of the heart which fears only a little bit, which does not love God with the warmth that it ought to have, and which has many erring desires and wicked thoughts. These things they extenuate, and even dare to say that evils such as these do not conflict with the law of God.

Therefore, since this synecdoche contains such manifest errors, let us leave the interpretation of our adversaries and return to Paul. Let us skillfully hold to the literal word and learn the doctrine of the remission of sins and of faith from Paul himself, and not bring in human notions of our own. In these arguments of Paul we shall understand the refutation of that synecdoche.

In Romans 4 Paul gives the most important argument in this area, and he takes it from these very sources: If the promise of reconciliation should depend on the condition of the Law as its cause, it would be uncertain. But it is necessary for this promise to our consciences to be certain. Therefore it is necessary that there be a free promise of the remission of sins and reconciliation, and that it be received by faith and not because of our own merits.

Paul's major point is that "the Law works wrath" [Rom. 4:15], that is, since no one can satisfy the Law, the Law accuses us all, and thus our conscience must always be in doubt and fall into despair, if it has to believe that we can be received by God only after we have satisfied the Law. Now although secure and idle minds are not moved by this argument, yet in true terrors of conscience we confess that we are guilty. Therefore it is necessary to hold to the idea of free reconciliation, as Paul says: "Therefore it is of faith, freely, that the promise might be certain" [Rom. 4:16].

He stresses the particle "freely" in order to refute that very synecdoche. You have the remission of sins freely, not because of your fulfillment of the Law, as the synecdoche says. Indeed, you cannot arouse any love for God unless you first by faith are assured that the wrath of God has been placated, as it says in Rom. 5:2: "By faith through Christ we have access to God." The subject matter shows that in this argument that synecdoche is refuted.

Furthermore, you will observe that the same passage teaches that by "faith" is meant not only the knowledge of the historical facts, such as the devils possess, but the assent whereby we believe the promise, and the confidence in God's mercy offered in the promise. For He commands that the promise be received by faith, and He commands that you be sure that God truly wants to forgive you and receive you, and He urges you to believe this, and by this faith to invoke Him. Such faith is not only the knowledge of the history or the commandments, which only brings greater terrors to our souls, as James [2:19] correctly says regarding this knowledge: "The devils . . . believe, and tremble" [KJV]. They know the Son of God but do not accept the promise; indeed, they are tormented with horrible fear of the judgment to come.

Eph. 2:8: "Freely you have been saved, through faith, and this not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." Clearly he is excluding our worthiness and affirming that we have been reconciled by faith. Therefore we must not allow this statement to be corrupted by that synecdoche, but insist that the apostle means what he says, namely that by faith for the sake of Christ we have been received into grace.

Gal. 2:16: ". . . knowing that man is not justified by the works of the Law but by faith in Jesus Christ; and we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we are justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law."

Various people try to get around these statements with various sophistries. Some say that only the ceremonial law of Moses is excluded, and others admit that justification by works is taken away from the unregenerate. But these cavilings can easily be refuted by sane and godly people who love the truth. For sane people must agree that neither the ceremonial law nor the moral law, whether the works precede or follow regeneration, merit the remission of sins.

Finally, although we have brought together many statements concerning faith, such as "Justified by faith, we have peace . . ." [Rom. 5:1]; again: "With the heart we believe unto righteousness" [Rom. 10:10], and others of this kind, the adversaries contend that all of these have been spoken incorrectly and imprecisely, and they dream up an interpretation out of their own human reason. But we, having gathered and compared all the passages of Paul dealing with this dispute, and the testimonies of the prophets, judge that Paul meant what he said: By faith we human beings are accounted righteous, that is, for the sake of Christ the Mediator we receive remission of sins and reconciliation, by confidence in the mercy promised for His sake, and not because of our own worthiness.

Then, to make the matter even clearer, we also teach that when our hearts are in this way sustained by the voice of the Gospel and are raised up by faith, they receive the Holy Spirit, as Paul says in Gal. 3:14: "That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Therefore we are not talking about some idle knowledge, and those who are inexperienced make a mistake in thinking that the remission of sins comes to the idle, without any emotion of the soul, without struggle, without trust which comforts the soul.

Since the Holy Spirit in this work of giving comfort brings new desires and a new life, this conversion is called "regeneration," John 3:5, and it is necessary that obedience follow, as I will say later.

When the conscience seeks the remission of sins, questions about predestination should be laid aside. For just as the preaching of repentance pertains to all people, so the promise of grace is universal and brings reconciliation to all. At this point it is helpful to keep before us some of these universal statements, so that we truly include ourselves in them and understand that God truly wants to forgive also us, to hear our prayers, and to receive us. Matt. 11:28: "Come unto Me, all you that labor. . . ." John 3:16: ". . . that whoever believes in Him should not perish." Acts 10:43: "To Him all the prophets give testimony, that through His name

we receive the remission of sins, all who believe in Him." Acts 13:39: "In Him everyone who believes will be justified." Rom. 3:22: ". . . the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ in all and upon all who believe." Here the particle which refers to universality is repeated, so that we may know that this did not accidentally escape the writer. Rom. 10:11–13: "Whoever believes in Him shall not be put to shame. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord of all bestows His riches upon all who call upon Him. For everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

"God has consigned all under disobedience, in order that He might have mercy on all," Rom. 11:32. This is the way we should also understand the statement: "God wants all people to be saved," 1 Tim. 2:4. But we are not to judge otherwise concerning the will of God than the Gospel teaches, which has been brought from the bosom of the eternal Father, that the will of God may be revealed clearly to us. We must also carefully consider that it is the universal mandate of God that all should hear His Son, as He says: "Hear Him," Matt. 17:5, and that all should believe the promises of God. If a person wishes to explore this subject, he will come to understand that salutary doctrine and comfort have been given to godly people.

Concerning free will we have said elsewhere that since in conversion our will must be moved by the Word of God, this Word must certainly be heard, and since with the Word of God the Holy Spirit does His work, raising up and helping our hearts, we are to sustain ourselves with faith. Nor should we idly indulge in mistrust or other vices against conscience, nor trouble the Holy Spirit, but rather give assent to the Word of God and follow the Holy Spirit. In this spiritual struggle we feel that our will in contending against doubt and other vices is not idle.

Paul instructs us about this very thing when he says in 2 Cor. 6:1: "We entreat you not to receive the grace of God in vain." He wills that the Gospel be heard, He wills that we assent to it and follow it, not indulging ourselves in wickedness contrary to our conscience. Furthermore, in Luke 11:13 it says: "He will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him." It does not say, "to those who spurn Him, or grieve Him, or resist Him." Therefore He wills that we struggle with our infirmities. He wills that we acknowledge our sins and seek deliverance, that we do not cling to them contrary to our conscience. Thus the will is not an idle thing.

I have set forth the doctrine of the Gospel concerning the remission of sins and reconciliation or justification, as correctly and properly as I could. I have no doubt that this is the thinking of the learned fathers, even though from time to time they spoke with unfortunate language. There is nothing complicated, nothing puzzling, nothing tricky, nothing sophistic in this statement which I have dealt with, or in our explanation of the subject. For what more simple statement can be made than that man receives the remission of sins and reconciliation for the sake of Christ the Mediator, by faith, that is, by trusting in the promise of God's mercy for His sake and not because of our human virtues? This statement is easy for all pious minds to understand and judge in the true exercises of repentance and in daily prayer, which could not take place if faith did not look to the Mediator for whose sake our prayers are heard. Therefore I call upon the judgment of the church, that is, I address it to godly people, learned and intelligent, in their struggles with repentance and prayer.

Locus 9
Good Works

After we have explained the doctrine of reconciliation and faith it is necessary to add the doctrine concerning good works or the new obedience. Therefore I want to say clearly and plainly that our obedience, that is, the righteousness of a good conscience or of the good works which God has commanded us, must necessarily follow our reconciliation. For Christ clearly gives command regarding repentance, and Paul says, "We are debtors not to live after the flesh," Rom. 8[:12]. Also 1 Cor. 6[:9], "Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor idolaters, nor thieves . . . will inherit the kingdom of God." 1 John 3[:7–8], "Let no man deceive you. He who does righteousness is righteous. He who commits sin is of the devil. . . . For this purpose the Son of God came that He might destroy the works of the devil." Thus we are born again in reconciliation so that the new obedience might be begun in us. Likewise it is written to the Ephesians, 2[:10], "We are His workmanship created through Christ Jesus unto good works which God has prepared that we should walk in them." This statement contains the teaching and the comfort which we need, for regarding the necessity of this teaching, it first says that we "have been created unto good works." Then there is comfort in the fact that he says that God has prepared beforehand these good works in the church, just as He prepared beforehand in Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others the marvelous works through which He both calls, governs, and preserves His church; and as He says in another place, "Strengthen, O God, that which You have wrought in us," Ps. 68[:28]. Likewise Paul says that these good works have been prepared by God, that is, not only commanded, ordained, and begun by Him, but also aided and established. Although the church struggles under great difficulties, as the afflictions of Jeremiah, Paul, and others demonstrate, yet the church does many important and salutary things for others, even if the world does not in any way understand them. But we ought to understand our own calling so that we may perform the works which have been prepared by God. There are five chief questions pertaining to good works. They are the following:

1. What works must be done?
2. How can they be performed?
3. How are they pleasing to God?
4. Why must they be performed?
5. What is the difference among sins, since in this life we must confess that sins remain in the saints?

Which Works Must Be Done?

Those works must be performed which have been commanded us in the Word of God and summarized in the Decalogue. In regard to this matter we need to know that not only the external works of the Decalogue must be done which can be imitated even by the ungodly, but there must be a beginning of the inner obedience. And the inner works which pertain to the First Commandment are that we must believe the Word of God, fear God, and trust in God. The fear of God is seen in our contrition. Faith is seen more clearly when it guides us in our terror over sin. These virtues must continue and be exercised throughout our whole life. And faith assures us that we have already been received by God because it knows the goodness of God toward us and it produces the love for God by which we submit ourselves to the will of God. Then follow the other good works which are performed in keeping with all the commandments.

The adversaries want to appear to be treating the doctrine of works as something very important, although they actually are speaking only of external hypocrisy or human ceremonies. But they do not know the works of the First Table and they bury the real source of good works. They say nothing about faith which is trust in the mercy and the free reconciliation of God, nor of the necessity of praying to Him in all situations. And when this faith is taken away then doubt prevails which either despises God or flees His wrath and does not call upon Him. Further, the hypocrites give approval to this doubt and support it while denying that faith must be understood as confidence and trust in the mercy of God. They say that faith only refers to the kind of knowledge that the devils have. It is certainly most lamentable to pervert the doctrine of the prophets and apostles in this way and actually to subject it to the most terrible torture rather than to yield to statements such as these: Faith means trust in the mercy of God, "Abraham believed God . . ." Gen. 15[:6]; "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God," Rom. 5[:1]; "Through Christ we have access by faith . . ." Rom. 5[:2]; "I now live by the faith of the Son of God," Gal. 2[:20]. We must not allow these passages to be perverted or ignored, for we certainly must know that they were spoken to us with regard to trust in God's mercy and we must learn in all of our prayers that we can approach God in trust as His children and that we are not received by Him because of our own worthiness.

Therefore the most important good work is faith or trust in the mercy of God which must be exercised in all the perils of our life and in every prayer. When David was involved in his struggles he believed that he was pleasing to God because of God's promise; and because he knew that he had been called to this obedience in discharging his duties, he was obedient, he

prayed and he looked to God for guidance in his troubles. Here the inner worship distinguishes the true church from the common multitude of humanity. Cicero lived an honorable life, he was well-deserving among the whole race of mankind for his role in governing the republic, indeed he even understood that there was a god, one definite eternal mind which was the cause of good, as Plato had defined him. And those graven images which the public worshiped had nothing of the divine about them. And yet, later on, the mind of Cicero was overwhelmed with doubt about providence, because he did not know the promises of God, and he doubted that he and others were heard or helped when they prayed, especially in times of calamities in which they felt that they were deserted by an angry god. The same was the case with Saul.

Therefore there is a difference between Cicero and Jeremiah. Jeremiah served his country, but faith enlightened this work. Jeremiah was assured that he was pleasing to God, and that his prayers were heard, and that he was under God's protection, even if he saw a great mountain of calamities threatening him—his fatherland destroyed, his fellow citizens scattered, many things which had been preserved by the clear blessing of God now cast off by Him, his own people engaged in bloody slaughters among themselves, and finally his own death. When Cicero saw such things befalling him, they overwhelmed him in darkness and unending doubt. The human mind cannot without faith know anything other than that which is said by Lucan:

"Is nothing certain but the uncertain wandering of chance which goes this way and that, and do the affairs of mortals have an ending?"

But Jeremiah overcomes such doubts and with great constancy believes that he is pleasing to God and in this faith he seeks and awaits the happy outcome of His guidance which would follow after 70 years.

Christ gives us a precept concerning this inner worship when He says in John 4[:24], "They who truly worship the Father will worship Him in Spirit and in truth," that is, with truly spiritual motives, fear, repentance, faith, prayer, and things of this kind. Paul calls this kind of worship "our reasonable service," Rom. 12[:1], that is, the mind understands God and recognizes the wrath of God, and on the other hand sustains itself by faith, and faith even beholds the Son of God and acknowledges that we for the sake of Christ the Mediator have been accepted by God. In regard to this inner worship, Isaiah in 66[:2] attacks the hypocrites who think that worship is the outward obedience and the observance of the ceremonies of the temple, saying, "Thus says the Lord, 'To whom shall I look? I shall regard the man who is humble and contrite in spirit, who trembles at My Word.' " Likewise, in Ps. 50[:15], He admonishes the superstition of external worship and demands the worship in the heart and true invocation, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble."

How Can Good Works Be Performed?

I have often said that we must not indulge in the idle human notion that we can govern our outward behavior by human diligence and human powers and that God demands this kind of diligence, as it is written, "The Law is given for the unjust," 1 Tim. 1[:9]; or "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit," Eph. 4[:30]. But the inner obedience cannot be begun without knowing the Gospel and without the Holy Spirit. For, in the first place, love for God cannot exist before the hearing of the Gospel regarding forgiveness. The mind which does not know reconciliation either despises God or flees from His wrath. Therefore love cannot be begun unless one first hears the voice of the Gospel of reconciliation. These points are very clear. Therefore, in order that love may arise, faith must precede, that is, trust in God's mercy of which we have been speaking. And we also must understand that when our terrified minds are guided by faith, then at the same time the Holy Spirit is given who arouses in our hearts new desires which are in harmony with the law of God. And in this way, in Gal. 3[:14], Paul teaches that the Holy Spirit is given, "that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith," and Zechariah describes this forgiveness and these chief works of the Holy Spirit in these beautiful words [in 12:10], "I will pour out the Spirit of grace and supplication upon the house of David." He calls Him the "Spirit of grace" because He testifies in our hearts that God is favorable toward us, that is, He moves our hearts so that they assent to His promise and we know that we have been received by God. Then when we know the mercy of God, we invoke Him, love Him, and subject ourselves to Him. Therefore He calls Him "the Spirit of supplication," and he includes as the main aspects of our worship the universal sources of our obedience, namely, faith and supplication.

Thus, from this passage we draw our teaching and our encouragement. We should also remember that in this passage we have been commanded to perform this worship in order that we may believe in God and call upon Him. Therefore the Holy Spirit is driven out and grieved when faith has died and our prayer life upset through lapses of an evil conscience.

After the fall of the human race a great weakness came upon us, and the traps of the devil, who strives in hatred toward God against the human race and is eager to increase his own position against God through his stubborness, shamelessness, blasphemies, drives mankind into various kinds of sins because of man's weakened nature. He arouses depraved thoughts which in turn devise opinions contrary to the Word of God. He scatters the church and involves the kindgoms of the world in unjust wars. He drives the church from places where it is well received in order that he may divide and destroy it. Thus he caused Cain to burn in malice and hatred against his brother and thus inflicted

not only murder upon Abel but auguish upon his parents, yet God upheld them. These examples of the most tragic calamities occur daily among the race of men. What a wretched end there has been for the majority of mankind, Saul, Jonathan, Hector, Priam, Achilles, Ajax, Pompey, Caesar, and countless more! Finally, we know the complaints about ill fortune, the sudden ruination of good fortune. You do not know what this very night will bring. And suddenly, by accident, all the things which we value shall vanish away.

Therefore, although the entire human race lives in constant perils, yet the church is attacked much more furiously, for the devil opposes it even more vigorously, as is said at the very beginning of Genesis, "The serpent shall wound His heel," Gen. 3[:15]. With what savagery he has moved about in the church after the Mohammedan fury came upon us 90 years ago! What ruin of the churches followed! What else can be imagined except that in a brief time the rest of Europe will be overcome by the Turks!

Therefore, since the condition of things clearly shows that the devil is loose and prowling around laying traps for us, and since the weakness of human nature is manifest, shall we oppose the aid that is shown us in the Gospel? God forbid!

The Son of God promises that He will be with us and will destroy the savagery of the devil. Thus John says, 1 John 3[:8], "For this purpose the Son of God appeared, that He might destroy the works of the devil," sin, death, blasphemies, and the destructiveness which the devil creates. Thus Adam and Eve were saved in their struggle when they kept their eyes on the promise and sustained themselves by their faith and sought from God another offspring through whom the true doctrine might be propagated. The Son of God protected them against the devil and by the Holy Spirit He raised up their downcast minds. Thus Jacob says of the Son of God, "May the angel who has rescued me out of all my troubles bless these boys," Gen. 48[:16], for it is the proper work of the Son of God to bless and to free from all evils, from the wrath of God, from eternal death, and from the other punishments which accompany the wrath of God. In Isaiah 7[:14] Christ is called Emmanuel, that is, God with us, because He is with us with all His riches. He keeps watch over us and drives away the devil.

Furthermore, He pours His Holy Spirit into the hearts of those who pray for Him. Thus in John 14[:18], "I will not leave you comfortless." Again, [vv. 14, 16–17], "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. . . . And I will ask the Father and He will give you another Comforter . . . the Spirit of truth." We will truly find this help, if we stand against the corrupt maneuvers and traps of the devil and in these struggles pray to God with trust in His Son, our Mediator, just as He has specifically said, "If you ask anything in My name . . . ." For there must be a difference between the true prayer of the people of God and the prayers of the Jews or Turks. For in every prayer faith at the very outset assures itself of two things, namely, that you believe in this eternal God and invoke Him who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified for us and raised again. And in the second place, faith is certain that for the sake of this Mediator God truly accepts and hears your prayers. The godly should note this carefully, for this prayer makes a tremendous difference between the church and the heathen who are fighting against the Gospel.

The teaching concerning the second question must always be kept before us so that we may know with certainty that the Son of God is our helper and defender, as Paul also says when he tells us that He was with the people in the wilderness, 1 Cor. 10; and also that we may know with certainty that the Holy Spirit is given to those who ask for Him, as it is written in Eph. 4[:8], "He ascended on high and gave gifts to men." And He rules in such a way that He can give His gifts, righteousness, life, good counsel, governance, successes, and other good things. In order that we may believe this concerning God's help, we must strengthen ourselves with the testimonies of the Gospel and drive away the darkness from our human minds which imagine that God is idle and unconcerned about individuals, in the same way that Homer imagined that Jupiter, when they looked for him in heaven, was away at a banquet in Ethiopia [*Iliad,* 1.423]. These odd suggestions indicated what kind of thoughts men have about God, and I have cited them in order to refute them and to kindle the true knowledge of God, His wrath and His mercy.

How Do Good Works Please God?

It is evident that godly minds are tormented and also hopeful that their obedience may be pleasing to God, but in this terrible weakness of ours they see that our obedience is crippled, impeded, imperfect, corrupt, as Paul says in Rom. 7[:15]. Therefore godly minds ask how they may please God.

Hypocrites judge this matter one way, and anxious and troubled minds another. The hypocrites think that they do satisfy the Law, that they are righteous, that is, that they have been accepted by God because of their own worthiness or their fulfillment of the Law, as the Pharisee says in Luke 18:9–12. There are always people like this who admire their own virtues, who give long tributes to their own wisdom and righteousness, especially in secondary matters which are showy, which they think they can govern by their own ideas and which they choose to accept as the divinely given fruits of their own virtues and diligence, since things are peaceful. Therefore they tout themselves above others because of their wisdom and righteousness, as Nebuchadnezzar did, who after some important things had happened, said, Dan. 4[:30], "This is Babylon, that

is, the kingdom established by my strength." Likewise Saul believed that the kingdom of Israel had been established by his power, although he should have known that both this power and the successes were blessings from God, and that he could not have accomplished or ruled over such things by himself, and that he must serve God in fear lest he be deserted by Him. But he became even more confident because of these successes and took unto himself the privilege of attacking other people, killing priests, etc. This is the picture which many hypocrites project, and there are not a few who are like this, self-confident, pleased with themselves because of their gifts, applauding their own wisdom, minimizing the divine doctrine, and from this exalted position ridiculing the Gospel by trickery, fraud, and power, oppressing that part of the teaching to which they are opposed, covering up valuable books because they are boasting that they are contending for the glory of God and for the truth, that they are the most steadfast pillars of the church, members of the people of God, because they are fighting for the established order and its power which has been accepted for a very long time. The priests who opposed the apostles were like this and we ourselves see the same kind, many of them, in recent years, such as Vicelius and others. But others are troubled. They recognize their weakness and they are struggling with despair, as Peter when he was cast down, cried, "Depart from me, O Lord . . . " Luke 5[:8]. Therefore at this point we must do both: we must attack arrogance and show true consolation to those who are troubled.

But first of all we must establish this point: Although in the regenerate there must be a beginning of obedience and the righteousness of a good conscience, yet sins still remain in them, that is to say, the disease which is born in us, the doubts, the ignorance of many things; or in other words, that they do not fear God as they ought nor burn with love toward Him as the Law demands. There are also many actual sins, many fires of illicit love, hatred, lust, vindictiveness, jealousy, hatred, and greed. Many fall in their calling. There are examples of manifest neglect, frightful complaints against God in times of adversity; often human refuges are sought under the cover of honorable behavior, while at the same time the individuals are acting out of defiance of God. We often witness people taking on religious duties which are neither necessary nor in keeping with their calling, confidence in one's own wisdom or power, as when Josiah provoked an unnecessary war against the Egyptians.

Finally, the mountains of sin which cling to the regenerate are far greater than can be comprehended by the judgment of any man. Thus we must not think that the statement, "Who can understand his sins?" of Ps. 19[:12], is a matter of little importance. It would take too long to list all the kinds of sin which remain in the saints, but Paul summarizes the matter in Romans 7 when he speaks of his inner conflict with all sins. But these proud hypocrites do not understand these secret sins. The monks even teach that these doubts concerning providence, the wrath of God, His mercy, our wicked desires, unless there is consent to them, are not sins; and they are not arguing about terminology but about the substance of the matter itself. They deny that these wicked things are in conflict with the law of God. This extenuation is false and demeaning toward the law of God. It brings only darkness over the doctrine of grace and the righteousness of faith and confirms the false idea that the regenerate can satisfy the law of God.

Therefore, in order that this arrogance may be brought under control, I shall cite testimonies which show that the regenerate, in this life, do not satisfy the law of God and that sin remains in this mortal nature of ours. Ps. 143:2, "Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight shall no living person be justified"; 1 John 1:8, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"; Ps. 19:12–13, "Who can understand his sins? Cleanse me from hidden faults and spare Your servant from the sins of others"; Rom. 7:23, "I see another law at work in my members waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner to the law of sin which is in my members." Now, although the sophists get around this passage and say that there has been a shift in the word "sin," and that here the word refers to "the punishment of sin," the tendency to sin which has come from the fall of our first parents, yet Paul himself refutes this sophistry in his definition of sin itself, when he says that it is an evil in our members which is at war with the law of God.

Furthermore, we have discussed in regard to this article whether the wickedness which remains in our nature is something which is in conflict with the law of God. Human judgment excuses this corruption, but Paul uses very graphic words to describe this terrible thing. He says that the corruption is at war in his members, that it is viciously contending against the law of his mind, confirming his carnal security or his righteousness which is at odds with God, filling his mind with pride in his own virtues and arrogance, kindling lusts, hatred, desire for revenge, and urging him to seek forbidden help; and finally it takes him captive, because it overthrows the antagonisms of his mind by fears and brings him to the point of despair, so that he flees from God. These are not unimportant evils, as human philosophy believes, but they harshly torment the saints, just as Moses became weak and cast down with sudden uncertainty and doubt at the episode at the rock, Ex. 17:4, and just as David fell into sin when he commanded the census of the people, or as his human pride was overly puffed up, so that he might demonstrate that his kingdom had increased, or that by human wisdom and without the command of God he was going to make a new ordering in the kingdom.

In Matt. 6:12 Christ teaches the saints to pray,

"Forgive us our trespasses." Therefore through our whole life there are sins present in us for which we need to ask forgiveness. He teaches the same thing when He says, Luke 17:10, "When you do all the things which have been commanded, then say, 'We are unprofitable servants.' " Note also 1 Cor. 4:4, "I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not thereby justified," which teaches us that there is need for the righteousness of a good conscience, but yet it says that this still is not the thing on account of which I am certain that I have the remission of sins and that I am reconciled with God; but rather God accepts me for the sake of His Son the Mediator by faith. Ps. 103:3, "If you, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who would stand?" By this statement the psalmist is recognizing that sin is present and he does not try to excuse it; but acknowledges that the wrath of God is so great that it could not be borne unless God forgives it by His immeasurable mercy for the sake of His Son. For human nature cannot endure the wrath of God and the punishments which it rightly deserves, as Hezekiah confesses, "As a lion He will break my bones," Is. 38:13; and Job in ch. 9 says that no one can resist the wrath of God.

Therefore, although sins are present with us and the godly to some degree recognize the wrath of God, yet they believe that they are pleasing to God because of His promised mercy, and they sustain themselves with this comfort, as Ps. 33:20 ff. says, "My soul sustains itself in His Word . . . my soul hopes in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy"; Ps. 32:5–6, "I said I will confess against myself my transgression unto the Lord, and You forgave the iniquity of my sin; for this shall every one who is holy pray unto You." He clearly says that the saints seek the remission of sins. Ex. 34:7 (Vlg.), "No man of himself is innocent before You," that is, even if a person cannot be condemned or convicted by human judgment, yet You can accuse him. Dan. 9:7–9, 18–19, "To You, Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us confusion," that is, we acknowledge that You are righteous and that we are punished justly. "To You belong, Lord our God, mercy. . . . Therefore we do not pray to You because of our righteousness but because of Your great mercies. . . . Hear us for the Lord's sake," that is, for the sake of the promised Mediator. This passage is a very clear testimony to the general consensus of the prophets and apostles. Indeed, Daniel teaches the same thing for which Paul so copiously contends, when he says that we understand that the nature of man is wicked and does not satisfy the Law, but that we are accepted by God through His mercy for the sake of the promised Lord. For Daniel specifically adds the words, "for the sake of the Lord," v. 19. We should compare testimonies like this with Paul in order that we may see that there is one ongoing belief by the universal church of God, the patriarchs, the prophets, Christ, and the apostles, and we must cling to this consensus and not depart from it, even if the disturbance caused by some recent monks creates a division which in a wicked way has mixed philsophy in with the doctrine of the Gospel.

In 1 Cor. 1:31, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord," that is, we cannot be glorified or exalted because we are without sin, but we glory in the Lord, that is to say, in the Lord who promises us mercy. Just as it is said in another place, "God has imprisoned all under sin that He might have mercy on all," Rom. 11:32. Likewise Rom. 3:9, "We have said that all are under sin." At a later point in v. 19 the assertion is added, " . . . that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God." He often repeats this concept of universality, so that there should be no doubt that He is accusing all. Therefore we should acknowledge our own weakness and confess that also in the regenerate there are sins, such as the depravity of our nature and the many sinful desires; and we must stand in shame in the knowledge of the wrath of God against these evils and grieve that there is still in us so much hostility toward the will of God; and there must increase in us true repentance. The admission of our own weakness will counteract our pride, make us subject to God, encourage us to fear God, to implore His mercy and seek His help.

But after our pride has been put under attack, pious minds must still learn about faith, lest they fall into despair. We must teach how our beginning obedience may be pleasing to God. In this locus we shall always join together these three points:

First, the regenerate person must be assured that he is reconciled with God by faith for the sake of the Son of God, as is often said, that our person is accepted by God for the sake of His Son, by faith, freely.

Second, the regenerate person must recognize that in this life sin and weakness still remain in those who have been born again, and he must truly lament that he still has this darkness, corruption, disorder, and wicked desires against the law of God.

Third, he must also be assured that obedience and the righteousness of a good conscience must be begun, and that this is far from the perfection of the Law, and yet in the case of those who have been reconciled, it is pleasing to God for the sake of His Son the Mediator who presents our prayers and our worship before the Father and overlooks our weakness. Thus for the sake of Christ a person is first reconciled, then his works are accepted, and his faith sheds light on both of these points. Therefore Peter says in 1 Peter 2:5, "Offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

We must think about these three points every day in regard to our works. For we must not dream that God is not concerned about our works, for He really does care. He demands obedience and with horrible penalties, both temporal and eternal, He punishes the evil behavior which is contrary to good conscience. Therefore it is necessary to possess the good righteousness of a good conscience and to know how it pleases God.

For a doubting and corrupted conscience cannot call upon God. We must carefully inculcate these teachings in our minds. For faith struggles in these exercises, and true knowledge of God and spiritual renewal increase in these struggles.

Faith is trained in good works in two ways. First, it determines that its obedience is pleasing to God, as I have said above. Then it also seeks aid, as David understood, when he realized that his rule was being hindered and endangered; but he believed that his labors were pleasing to God because of the promise of God's mercy. Then he sought God's help and labored in the defense of his people and in controlling the conduct of his citizens as best he could. There is no doubt that this is a worthwhile instruction for godly minds, which, although they are anxious to obey God, yet they recognize the darkness of their nature, and their various sins, and they are so sorry for them that they almost fall into despair. But what sweeter comfort can be given them than these words of Paul in Rom. 8:1, "There is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus . . ."? That is, even though the regenerate are not without sin, yet God has received them and pronounced the believers righteous for the sake of His Son. In so doing He also accepts their obedience for the sake of His Son.

In Col. 1:28 it says, "You are presented perfect in Christ Jesus," that is, even if the regenerate do not yet fulfill the Law, yet they are righteous and pleasing to God for the sake of His Son. Here we should confess and celebrate the fulness of the mercy of God, that in those who have been reconciled, this obedience which is incomplete, imperfect, unclean, and corrupted by many wicked desires, is still accepted by God, not indeed because of the worth of our virtues but because of the Son of God, Rom. 6:14, "You are not under the Law but under grace." At this point the question is asked: Does our obedience please God when it does not satisfy the Law? Paul replies that it does please Him because "we are not under the Law," that is, we are not condemned by the Law; but we are under grace, that is, we have been reconciled or accepted into grace, Rom. 8:34, "Who will condemn us? It is Christ who died for us and rose again, who is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us," that is, the saints are pleasing to God because of the intercession of Christ. Rom. 3:31, "We establish the Law through faith." This is a very brief statement, but it teaches exactly what we are saying, that obedience cannot be begun in us, nor does it please God unless faith is added which determines that the person and the beginning obedience are both pleasing to God for the sake of the Mediator. Thus, says Paul, "We establish the Law," we do not minimize obedience, but we insist upon it and we reassert it; and in order that it might be retained, we teach how this obedience can be rendered and how it can please God.

Now, after we have said how this obedience may please God, which we all recognize is far from a perfect obedience to the Law, then we shall add testimonies which clearly tell us that the works of the saints or their beginning obedience are pleasing to God. From these passages we surely are aroused to a zeal for well-doing, and at the same time we instruct ourselves in regard to the immeasurable mercy of God who not only approves of our defective obedience but even adorns it with honor and rewards. For we should take a look at ourselves and realize what a rare thing an outstanding virtue is. There are certain pictures of this kind of virtue in men, but they are weak and fleeting and can never satisfy the law of God which requires far greater light and order in the nature of man than is there, and yet these pictures or attempts are received by God, as the passage says, for the sake of His Son who earnestly intercedes for us. Likewise, in Rom. 10:10 it says, "With the heart we believe unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." When God demands confession He wills that our whole life be a confession. Therefore our whole life must be directed to honoring God, to showing what we profess, and to adorning the Gospel, as the passage says, "Let your light shine," Matt. 5:16. For example, that a prince may show what he believes, he calls upon God in times of danger to show that he is rendering obedience; that he may serve God, he destroys ungodly religions, that the banners of his confession may fly far and wide. In the same way, let each of us in our calling have the signs of our confessions. Let the scholar show his belief, let him call upon God in every turn of his life which is so filled with dangers, let him refute all ungodly ideas and in governing his desires, let him demonstrate that he is rendering such great obedience in order that he may serve God and adorn the Gospel. The life of man is so intertwined with others that both in our life and conversation our confession must shine forth in all of our duties.

But why does it say, "Confession is made unto salvation"? The answer is brief: Even if we are righteous for the sake of Christ, that is, even if we have been received unto eternal life, yet it is necessary that this newness follow. He wills this to be present when he says, "Confession is made unto salvation." Note also 2 Cor. 5:2–3, "Desiring to be clothed upon, if being so clothed, we not be found naked," that is, it is necessary in this life that conversion take place and that the renewal begin at the same time. This conversion began in the robber on the cross. He was repentant. He recognized that he was being punished by God justly; and then by faith he acknowledged his Savior and begged salvation from Him. Thus he heard the clear absolution and the announcement and the promise of eternal life. Furthermore, in order that he might give a sign of his confession, he refuted his fellow-criminal who was cursing Christ.

This memorable example of these important matters serves as instruction to us that God is so concerned about His church that He raises up witnesses to His

teaching, even when she has been deserted by her great leaders. The apostles in their consternation were struck dumb, and scarcely a spark of faith remained among these enormous storms of doubt. At this point, God produces new witnesses and warns men by the unexpected eclipse, the earthquake, and the resurrection of some dead people, so that no one should think that this is some ordinary punishment or that they were forgotten by God, and this thief is raised up who is made an apostle to speak for a moment from the cross and affirm that this is the Messiah, the giver of eternal life. Then this story particularly teaches us that this is truly the meaning of the Gospel, that we are accepted by faith for the sake of the Son of God, even if we do not supply the necessary merits. Likewise, it teaches us regarding the nature of faith that it is not merely the knowledge of the facts, but a trust which seeks eternal life from the Son. When this flame has been kindled, he shows us that this is something far different from human reason. The sight of these torn and dying bodies does not frighten the thief from determining to entrust his life and to believe that those who flee to this Lord will have eternal salvation. But the others who despise this Lord, he realizes, will be in eternal torment. Because he believes that God is favorable toward him, he subjects himself to Him and loves Him. He understands that he is not being punished by some accident, but he gives thanks to God because he has been called to the knowledge of God and of his Lord. He wants to obey God even in enduring this punishment, he is not angry at the judgment of God, he realizes that the human race is being punished by God under this mountain of troubles because of sin and not as the philosophers think that we encounter death and other calamities only as accidents, and thus we must understand the wrath of God and seek deliverance. Therefore, in regard to his suffering, he perceives that we must be willing to obey God in bearing our afflictions. The thief is instructed in this conversion in regard to sin, the wrath of God, his punishment, the remission of his sins, and his righteousness, in order that he may understand that the wisdom of the saints is something far different from the wisdom of the Pharisees or of human reason. For in their afflictions the godly learn, as it says in Ps. 119:71, "It is good for me that You have humbled me, that I might learn Your righteousness." Finally, the thief came to his confession, in which he proclaimed that this is the Messiah, nor was he frightened by the spectacle of the punishments, but rather he condemned the other thief who with poisonous sarcasm has excoriated the punishment of Christ and condemned Him for being on the cross, just as the world arrogantly spurns Christ and His church because of their weakness. We must carefully examine this illustration of mockery. For just as this man ridiculed in the midst of death and subjected Christ to further shame, so the ungodly, even in the midst of their furious ravings, do not realize their own sins and bring additional shame upon Christ, even while He is offering them deliverance.

I have cited this example because it teaches us about several points and also shows that in a true conversion there is the beginning of the new obedience which also demonstrates itself in many upright actions, which, as I have said, are pleasing to God. Thus in Rom. 14:17, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." He who serves God in these respects is pleasing to Him and has the approval of his fellow men. Heb. 13:2 ff., "Be not forgetful of kindness and generosity . . . which are pleasing to God." Of Noah it is said in Gen. 8:20 ff., "God smelled a sweet odor," that is, He was pleased with the sacrifice of Noah, his prayer, his thanksgiving, his praise, and his teaching. There is a wonderful figure of speech in the word "to smell an odor," which is derived from the ancient ritual whereby through the sacrifices a sweet smell was said to be offered to God when the burnt offerings were made. This was a special testimony that the people were pleasing to Him and accepted by Him. Furthermore, in a general way the sacrifices were compared to sweet smells, and incense was added, because in all of their works there was supposed to be an odor, that is, the message from God was to be spread far and wide as a sweet-smelling fragrance, that is, the sacrifices were part of the act of celebrating and honoring God, so that other people might be invited by this good teaching and these good examples.

Why Are Good Works to Be Done?

There are many reasons: necessity, worthiness, and rewards. First, necessity is of different kinds. There is the necessity of command, the necessity of debt, the necessity of retaining faith, and the necessity of avoiding punishment. For although it is one thing to speak of compulsion, yet there does remain in force the eternal ordering of the immutable God that the creature shall render obedience to the will of God. This immutable ordering is the necessity of command and the necessity of debt, as Paul says in Rom. 8:6, "We are under obligation to God, not to the flesh." And Christ says in John 13:34, "This is My command that you love one another," cf. 1 Thess. 4:3, 8.

There is the necessity for retaining our faith, because the Holy Spirit is driven out and grieved when we permit sins against conscience. Thus it clearly says in 1 John 3:7–8, "Let no one deceive you; he who commits sin is of the devil." And Rom. 8:13, "If you put to death the deeds of the flesh, you will live; if you live according to the flesh, you shall die." That faith is cut off through sinful works is witnessed by this statement of Paul in 1 Tim. 5:8, "If a person does not provide for his own, especially those of his own house, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." Fur-

ther, faith cannot be present in those who indulge in depraved lusts and do not repent, for it is written, Is. 66:1–2, "Where does the Lord dwell? In a contrite spirit and one which trembles at My words." Likewise, when faith brings peace to our conscience, it cannot at the same time be present in a person who intends to retain his sin, because faith condemns this conscience. Thus Paul says, Rom. 14:23, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

Thus David drove out his faith and the Holy Spirit when he laid hands on another man's wife, and he troubled the Holy Spirit in several ways, first in his own heart by which he was urged on to his adultery, and then in many of the saints, to some of whom his offense brought sorrow, and to others an occasion for mischief. The same was the case with those poor women who were violated by Absalom and his soldiers, 2 Sam. 16:21 ff.

The necessity of avoiding punishment ought to move our minds, since we see the whole history of the world filled with the saddest events which surely are the punishments for sins. But so great is the blindness of men that they think all these things happen only by accident. This insanity must be removed. We must understand that all these sad events of mankind are truly punishments, both for the first fall and for other sins. As Ps. 38:2 ff. says, "Because of his sins You crush man." Indeed, since all present things are of short duration, present punishments do not correspond to the eternal wrath of God, but are witnesses to the judgment to come. God warns us to wait for another judgment in which we are not dealing with transitory and passing matters, but with matters of eternity. We must also keep this judgment in mind and instruct ourselves concerning this judgment, as often as we witness present punishments.

Further, we must resist this intellectualized caviling by which the blessings which come from fear of punishment are held up for criticism. The answer is simple for the godly who know that there are many causes and reasons for the same action. They know that we must do the right thing for the sake of God rather than because of the punishments. But they also know that God wills that His will and His wrath be acknowledged in the punishments we undergo, and that He wills that we fear present punishments as well as future ones. All punishments are very obvious; often sins are punished by sins and many people are implicated in sins and calamities. Often one person is guilty of all these evils, as in the case of the fall of David. What a terrible crime he committed, what hopelessness, blasphemy, and sadness he brought on all!

The worship of idols was permitted by Solomon, and this was the cause of the destruction of the kingdom of Israel. This invasion of idolatry brought religious controversy and unending wars. God wants us to consider these examples in order that we may fear His wrath and have a reason for concern for our own salvation and that of others. But the blind mind of man does not perceive the greatness of sin or the wrath of God. Indeed, it is not even sufficiently affected by present punishments, as in the case of the unrepentant thief who in the midst of his calamity was still mocking and deriding Christ.

Furthermore, the godly must learn, as has been said, to recognize the wrath of God in the enormous number of calamities which befall mankind and they must learn also to avoid the wiles of the devil, who little by little, one step after the other, coerces man and weaves the long thread of many miseries, so that finally he may force man to despair, as it is written, "The devil walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," 1 Peter 5:8.

The next cause is worthiness. Here again I caution you that we must not attribute any worthiness to our virtues, as if because of them a person has the remission of sins, or because of them he is satisfying the law of God, or as if they are the price of eternal life. But faith must shine forth and fully understand that we are pleasing to God because of the Son of God, as we have said above. But afterwards, after conversion, also for the sake of this Mediator, our worship is pleasing to God who does not will that the whole human race perish. Therefore He wills that there be the church in which He is confessed, invoked, worshiped, whose obedience He accepts for the sake of His Son; and He calls those works "sacrifices" by which God judges that He is treated with honor. Thus Peter says, 1 Peter 2:5, "Offer up spiritual sacrifices." This is the worthiness of one's vocation, not his person, as when a magistrate or apostle must stress and consider the importance of his own work, that these are very significant things, through which God rules our lives and gives eternal life. Therefore he will do everything in his power to be governed and aided by God, and for this reason.

Thus when any member of the church believes that it is the highest calling of all that he be a member of the people of God, he will pray to God for himself and for others; he will offer sacrifices, that is, every kind of good works which has been commanded by God. This worthiness of our calling must be understood and considered in this context: You must know that your study of Scripture and the uprightness of your life are truly very important matters and pertain to the glory of your calling and the need of others. Therefore God demands and approves this, as we have said, and governs and aids it. Therefore you shall perform the duties of your station with eagerness.

Rewards

In order that we may have certainty concerning the remission of our sins and our reconciliation, rewards are given to us freely for the sake of the Son of God and they must be received by faith. For they would be uncertain matters if they depended on the condition of

our merits. But in those who have been reconciled, after conversion, their good works, since they are pleasing by faith for the sake of the Mediator, as we have said, do merit spiritual and physical rewards in this life and after this life, as the parable of the talents in Matthew 25 clearly shows, v. 29, "To him who has shall be given . . ."; and in 1 Tim. 4:8, "Godliness . . . has promise of this present life and of the life to come"; cf. Mark 10:30; Matt. 10:42; Luke 6:38; Ex. 20:12; Is. 33:16; 58:10–11. Finally Scripture is full of promises of this kind concerning both spiritual and physical rewards; for in this life there is need for both. Individuals cannot keep their faith without practicing it; and without these spiritual gifts the true teaching cannot shine brightly nor the church and good government be preserved. Also, since God wills that in this life His doctrine be proclaimed, He gives a certain protection to those who teach and those who learn, and He preserves His church in a wondrous way, just as He preserved the ship in which Paul was being carried to Rome. Thus He promises blessings also for this present life. Although the church has been terribly tormented, yet there is always a remnant of the godly, just as victory comes even though many are killed on the battle line.

Therefore we must learn that there is a need for both kinds of good works and that the rewards have not been promised by God in vain, but there is the need for constant practicing of our faith, that it may grow and that we may labor more diligently even though we are undeserving of the rewards.

Further, faith is exercised in three different ways. First, when something else is going to be requested, faith always from the very beginning will think about the remission of sins, as David, when he could not seek victory unless he knew that he was pleasing to God.

Second, faith knows that good things do not happen by mere accident, as when the ungodly in Paul's ship imagined that the ship had been saved by an accident. But faith knows with certainty that we are cared for by God, defended and aided by Him, and that the promises have been given concerning His blessings in order that the Epicurean opinion, which believes that good and evil happen only by accident, may be thrust out of our minds. But we should learn that God truly gives good gifts and we must seek them from Him.

Third, faith is busily engaged in seeking aid and reward so that he who gives alms may also enjoy his own possessions and see that there will be something for his family, and if God has not taken care of them, faith seeks and awaits help and reward. In order that we may better understand these matters, we should look at the antithesis and examine our own sins. Therefore you may be less diligent in good works if you think that you are laboring in vain because you are displeasing to God. This figment of the imagination is in conflict with the first exercise of faith.You may be less liberal in the second exercise, if you think that these matters have been relegated to human diligence and are of no concern to God. This error conflicts with the second exercise of faith, for God demands this diligence on the part of man in order that He may will this activity of ours to be governed by His Word, as is the case with our other virtues. You must be diligent, but in keeping with the precepts of God; you must work, but not in performing useless and unnecessary things, but you shall devote yourself to things which are necessary and useful for the church and for the poor. In the third place, you would be less generous if you thought that God will not compensate and that your own loved ones will be in want. This hesitancy is in direct opposition to the third exercise of faith. Therefore, in order that faith may be kept in trim and grow, God has set forth many different kinds of works and He has added promises of aid and reward, so that there may be an opportunity for prayer on our part. For how will you look for eternal salvation from God if you do not look for a piece of bread from Him? Therefore we must fight against this lack of trust on our part and do the works which have been commanded; and even though they may be difficult, we must arouse thereby our faith and our prayer; we must also look to the rewards and be concerned about the universal church, the government, and our salvation. For the sake of these goals we must be more diligent in our calling, in controlling our morals, etc.

All of these points are depicted in the example of the widow of Zarephath and Elijah, 1 Kings 17. Elijah knew that he had been called by God to teach the people and that until God wanted him to carry out his ministry, he would not lack something to eat. With this confidence he sought and awaited his food and he went to the widow, and although he was worn out with his labors, yet commanded that food be brought to him. The widow told him of her poverty. At this point the prophet added the promise. The woman believed the word of the prophet that the God of Israel was truly the Creator and Savior, that He gives good gifts, that He would supply food for the future. Therefore, although she saw that this would take away food from herself and her son, because there was another mouth to feed, yet she fed the prophet first. Rewards followed this faith and this work. The family was fed for a long time, and it was without doubt by the blessing of God. Their home became a meeting place for the church where the prophet taught the whole area. Affliction followed this great glory. The son died. But new rewards followed again and the son was raised to life. By this example the woman was strengthened in her faith and the teaching of Elijah was spread far and wide. Therefore, understand how many great and good works this first duty which the woman performed in feeding the prophet produced and consider the mountain of rewards she received. For not only was the family fed, but it was instructed by the prophet concerning the true worship of God and eternal life and in many ways it was protected against the devil. The son was raised from the dead and became a disciple of the prophet, and he

doubtlessly utilized his services for the church later on. Even small insignificant works are adorned with rewards far greater than is owed. It is necessary that all the saints should confess with Jacob in Gen. 32:10, "I am not worthy of the least of Your mercies."

But although it is necessary that there be a beginning of the new life, as Paul says in 2 Cor. 5:2–3, "We desire to be clothed upon with new clothing, so that we not be found naked," yet our heart must always recognize what the psalmist says, Ps. 143:2, "In Your sight shall no flesh be justified"; Ps. 19:12, "Who can understand his sins?" Our heart must know that our virtues are not the price of our eternal life, but that this is certainly given for the sake of the Mediator, as Paul says in Eph. 2:8, "The gift of God is eternal life." Christ says in John 6:40,"This is the will of the Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him has eternal life." The pious mind in true repentance must meditate upon this statement and with certainty await eternal life for the sake of the Mediator. Nor can faith rely on two things, the Mediator and our merits, as an experienced conscience can easily judge.

What Is the Difference among Sins?

Although we have said that sins remain in the regenerate, it is still necessary that we deal with the difference among sins. For it is a certainty that those who fall into sins which are against conscience do not remain in grace, do not keep their faith, their righteousness, or the Holy Spirit; and faith cannot stand with evil intentions in the face of conscience, that is, faith which is confidence in our acceptance by God. For these desires are absolutely opposed to one another, and true prayer cannot exist with a bad conscience which flees from God, as it says in 1 John 3:21, "If our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God."

Therefore we must retain the rule that it is necessary in those who have been reconciled that there be this righteousness of a good conscience, as it says in 1 Tim. 1:5, "The sum of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, of a good conscience, and of genuine faith."

In the same chapter it says in v. 18–19, "Fight the good fight having faith and a good conscience." 2 Cor. 1:12, "This is our boast, the testimony of our conscience." 1 Peter 3:16, ". . . having a good conscience."

But many passages testify that those who allow themselves to sin against conscience are cut off from grace and drive out faith and the Holy Spirit, and become guilty of the wrath of God and eternal punishments. For example, Gal. 5:19–21, "The works of the flesh are manifest: adultery, fornication, uncleanness . . . idolatry . . . they who do such things shall not possess the kingdom of God." He is speaking of manifest works which are done against our conscience. 1 Cor. 6:9–10, "Do not make any mistake: neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God." Here Paul mentions by name, v. 11, that although some of them had previously been guilty of such vices, now they had mended their ways. He commands them that they must keep a good conscience and he bears witness that they shall perish if they continue in their previous iniquities.

Rom. 8:13, "If you live by the flesh, you shall die, but if through the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the flesh, you shall live." Here Paul is dealing with this difference. Many inner evils do remain in the regenerate, that is, a kind of darkness and corruption which is born in us. For although there is a beginning of light and a beginning of obedience, and although faith still does shine forth as a small spark in this thick darkness which is valiantly struggling with doubts and fighting against them, yet the fear of God, trust, and love are not as great as they should be. Then there are many wicked desires, such as admiration for ourselves and self-confidence, and different kinds of emotions, the flames of lust, a burning unrighteous anger and deception, such as were found in Miriam and Aaron against Moses. Finally, many sins still remain in the saints, sins of omission, as they are called, that is, neglect of our duty and mistakes in the home, the government and the church, which nevertheless are not done in violation of conscience on the part of the godly, who do demonstrate faith and show as great diligence as they can. But because the saints fight against their evil desires and believe that for the sake of the Son of God their weaknesses are forgiven, therefore they do remain in grace and keep their faith and the Holy Spirit. This is Paul's meaning when he says, "If you put to death the deeds of the flesh, you shall live."

This is a very unusual emphasis when he says, "Through the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the flesh." He is calling us to a bitter contest, he wants us to fight against our evil desires, and to do this by the Spirit, that is, with the true desires, the fear and faith which have been kindled by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God; it must consider how great a thing the wrath of God is, it must remember the examples of those who have fallen, such as Saul and others who were not restored to grace. Our mind must understand that countless sins and offenses flow even from one lapse. Again it must believe also that our obedience is pleasing to God and it must seek aid and guidance, as it is written, "Without Me you can do nothing," John 15:5. Likewise, "Ask and it shall be given to you," Matt. 7:7. "How much more shall your heavenly Father give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him," Luke 11:13. And as it says so often in the psalms: "Help me and I shall be saved"; and again, "Do with Your servant according to Your mercy and teach me Your righteousness"; Ps. 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God," that is, a heart which rightly believes that it has been purified by God through faith. And "renew a right spirit within me,"

that is, a spirit which is strong and does not doubt that a renewal has taken place "within me." Verse 11, "Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from me," that is, the Spirit who guides all my actions. Verse 12, "Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with Your free Spirit," that is, give me a willing spirit which does not flee from conflict and dangers and "strengthen me."

Thus Joseph repelled the illicit approaches of his master's wife; thus Jonathan strengthened himself against burning jealousy against David. Thus David kept himself in check from killing Saul and thus he sustained himself from being shattered by despair when he was driven into exile. Thus Paul teaches in Rom. 6:12, "Let sin not reign in your mortal body," and this seems to be taken from the word in Gen. 4:7, "Sin is lying at the door, and it desires you, but you must rule over it." For the word "to rule" does not mean something idle and cowardly, but it refers to the power of the Holy Spirit and the diligence of our will. Joseph saw the commandment of God and the punishments attendant upon it, the scandals and the other destructive involvements which would follow, and he rejected her sinful advances. He sought divine guidance and added to it his own determination. He ruled his eyes that they not wander lustfully, he controlled his loneliness and the opportunities which were offered him lest he be caught in the devil's snares. Godly people must learn to understand this precaution and to practice it, realizing that there is good reason for the statement, "You must rule over it . . . let not sin reign." When sin takes control it brings with it all kinds of troubles and the wrath of God and eternal death. On the other hand, when sin does not reign over us, the godly keep the righteousness and faith which have been given to them, and thus Paul can say, "If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the flesh, you shall live."

I have mentioned which sins remain in the regenerate, namely, certain inner evils against which they must contend. But when we permit sins which are against conscience, then the Holy Spirit is driven out and grieved, grace is lost and faith destroyed, that is, the confidence in the mercy of God. Paul is trying to say this when he says in Rom. 8:13, "If you live according to the flesh, you shall die," that is, if you obey the wicked desires of the flesh, you will be guilty of the wrath of God and eternal death. In the same chapter he says, v. 14, "Those who are led by the Holy Spirit, they are the sons of God." But those who go against conscience, drive out and grieve the Holy Spirit and therefore cease to be the sons of God, as also the passages cited above testify, such as 1 Cor. 6:9, "Do not be deceived; fornicators . . . shall not inherit the kingdom." Also John says in his First Epistle, 3:8, "He who commits sin is of the devil, that is, he is already a captive of the devil, guilty of the wrath of God and eternal punishment, driven by the devil into many more sins. These terribly tragic statements should encourage us to contend against the raging wickedness which battles against us, lest we fall from the grace which has been given to us. It is not necessary at this point to bring in the arguments concerning predestination, but rather we must simply form our judgments on the basis of the will of God which has been clearly found in the Word of God.

The Arguments of the Adversaries

We teach plainly and clearly that there must be in man the knowledge of the articles of faith; likewise, that there must be contrition, good intention, and the beginning of love. Our adversaries contend against these points which we, however, confess must exist in man himself. And we say that faith must also be added, that is, confidence in the mercy of God, that for the sake of the Son of God we have remission of sins, but not because of our virtues. The adversaries, on the other hand, say this must be a matter of doubt and they add that you will have remission of sins when you are worthy, that is, because of your own virtues. They also devise the notion that men can satisfy the law of God.

But since we retain all the things which they demand, and want to add the faith which attributes His honor to Christ and which gives sure comfort to terrified minds, we certainly are not teaching anything ridiculous. Yet without cause they so savagely attack the concept that has been set forth in our churches regarding justification, which undoubtedly is the very essence of the Gospel and the consensus of the holy patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and all godly people in all ages who have brought light to this subject. All people have believed that there must be in us repentance and that good works must follow, but yet that the remission of sins is given for the sake of the Mediator and not because of our own worthiness and that we please God for the sake of the Mediator and that this takes place by faith, that is, by trust they call upon the mercy of God, do not flee from Him and do not rage against Him. Therefore Paul often uses the particle "freely." Likewise Peter says in Acts 10:43, "To Him all the prophets give testimony, that through His name all who believe in Him receive the remission of sins." This consensus is the true witness of the church, and the experience of all the pious support this viewpoint. For our minds cannot without this comfort find rest in true contrition, or in the midst of real terrors. For when these things are absolutely certain, no sane person in the church can contradict them.

But the monks have written otherwise because they did not distinguish between Law and Gospel and spoke of justification in the philosophic way. Particularly they cited the thinking of Plato and Aristotle, that Achilles was a brave man because he had strength and a certain divine power; and thus they said that Paul was a righteous man because of his virtues and the

divine power, but they say nothing about the Mediator, the promises, the Gospel, of faith or trust in the Mediator; indeed, they command us to be in doubt about our reconciliation, that is, they command us to destroy the Gospel and the promise and to bury Christ. Therefore, as often as the argument about this subject comes into our minds, we should direct our eyes to this point: When it is actually and correctly said that repentance is necessary, and yet that we for the sake of the Son of God have remission, that we please God and that our prayers are heard, then we must attribute to the Son of God His honor; and in this faith or confidence in the promised mercy of God, I will call upon Him, as it is said, "Whatsoever you ask the Father in My name," that is, in trust in the Son, John 16:23; and again, "Through Him we have access to the Father," Rom. 5:2. And in order that there may be more eager instructors to refute the arguments of the adversaries, I shall cite and explain in order the principal points.

I

The word "righteousness" means obedience according to all the commandments: Faith of which we are speaking is properly not the work of all the commandments: Therefore we are not justified by faith.

I reply to the major premise this way:

The major premise is true, in regard to the righteousness of the Law, for the righteousness of the Law is properly obedience according to all the precepts. But because this corrupt nature does not satisfy the Law, therefore another thing has been revealed and given, which is our acceptance for the sake of the Son of God which is followed by the giving of the Holy Spirit. Therefore the word "righteousness" in the major premise means one thing and in the conclusion it means another. When Paul says in Rom. 3:28 that we "are justified by faith," he understands that by faith we obtain the remission of sins or the acceptance by God for the sake of the Mediator, freely, as he says in Rom. 4:3, "His faith was counted to him for righteousness." This explanation clearly shows that our position is not destroyed by this argument. Therefore we must carefully consider the sources. Many arguments have been developed by our adversaries by the judgment of reason or the Law, dealing with discipline, on which the eyes of all have been fixed, as Paul says, "Seeking to establish the Law of righteousness, they did not arrive at righteousness," Rom. 10:3, nor did they distinguish between Law and Gospel, nor notice that the Gospel in this question is not speaking of civil life but of reconciliation before God. These mysteries must be distinguished from our normal civil life in society. Therefore those who are careful students must dispel the darkness and the clouds, that is, the confusion of the Law and Gospel and the confusion of civil righteousness with reconciliation before God; and they must pay attention to the question which is under discussion.

II

It is impossible for knowledge alone to make a person just. Faith is the only knowledge: Therefore it is impossible to be made righteous by faith alone.

I shall first reply to the minor premise.

The word "faith" does not mean only knowledge, such as the devil possesses, of which James says, "The devils believe and tremble," James 2:19; but the word "faith" signifies knowledge in the mind and an assent to the promise concerning Christ, and in the will a trust by which the will desires and receives the offered mercy and rests in it. As when Cicero heard that safety had been promised to him by Caesar, knowledge followed in his mind and trust in his will by which he desired and received the offered kindness, and he remained content in this promise. Therefore faith is not only a knowledge but that trust, as we have said, by which the promise is laid hold upon; as the fourth chapter of Romans clearly testifies that faith is understood as that which accepts the promise which must be understood as trust in the mercy which has been given. But this argument also arises out of the imagination of our reason which always seeks some virtue of our own by which we should recognize that we are righteous, although in this situation it should not be said that we are righteous by faith, because the virtue in us is, in one way or another, such that we would have to conclude that there must be some virtue in us. But for this reason we say that we are justified by faith because faith lays hold on the promise and makes us understand that we have reconciliation for the sake of the Mediator.

Thus we must refute this argument that faith means trust: In trust there is love: Therefore we are righteous by love. I agree that in trust there is love and that there must be both this virtue and many others, but when we say that we are righteous by trust, this must not be understood to mean that we receive worthiness because of this virtue rather than through God's mercy for the sake of the Mediator, which must be laid hold on by faith. Therefore we make this correlative statement: Through mercy for the sake of the Son of God we have been reconciled to God, and it is necessary that this be received or estalished by faith, so that the will may find its rest in the propitiation which has been set forth.

Moreover the pious reader should understand how absurd and unworthy it is not to distinguish the faith of devils from that faith in which the church calls upon God, by which she approaches God and gains peace, as it says in Rom. 5:1–2. Likewise Rom. 10:11, "He who believes in Him shall not be ashamed"; Gal. 2:20, "I live by the faith in the Son of God." No one can fail to see how absurd a notion it would be if a person should believe regarding such passages that faith means nothing else than the kind of knowledge the devil has. For the knowledge of devils runs away from God, does not call upon Him nor draw near to Him. Thus the

statement of James 2:19 that "the devils believe and tremble" is not to be confused with Paul's position. Paul is speaking of one kind of faith and James of another. And it is easy for a sane man to understand that the faith of the church which calls upon God is not like the faith of the devil who flees from Him.

III

"He who does not love remains in death." Therefore it is impossible to say that a person is righteous by faith alone.

I agree with the above if you understand that faith must not be alone. But it does not follow from this that love is the cause for the remission of sins, just as it is necessary to add patience to faith, but it does not follow that our patience is a cause of our remission of sins. The exclusive particle does not exclude our virtues from being present, but it does exclude them as being the cause of our reconciliation, and this exclusionary idea does mean that the merit of Christ alone is the cause of our reconciliation. And we must also understand that it is necessary to remove our human imaginings from the righteousness of the Law which arises out of love for God. If human nature were without sin, it could truly love God, but because it is covered over with sin, it must first receive the remission of sins, and love cannot be kindled unless the remission of sins has been recognized and laid hold upon. And those who think that this can be received without the struggle of faith are thinking too weakly regarding the remission of sins.

IV

We are righteous by faith: Faith is a work: Therefore we are righteous because of our works.

I reply to the major premise this way:

The major premise must be understood in a correlative sense: that is, we are righteous by faith, that is, through mercy for the sake of Christ we are righteous, not because faith is a virtue which merits the remission of sins by its own worthiness. But we must concede the expression which is added, that faith is a work. For it is a work, just as love, patience, and chastity. And just as these are weak and faltering, so faith is very uncertain and is upset by many doubts. Therefore we do not say that we are righteous by faith in the sense that this is a worthiness of such great power that it merits remission, but in the sense that there must be some instrument in us by which we lay hold upon our Mediator who intercedes for us, and on account of whom the eternal Father is favorable toward us.

V

We are righteous by grace: Grace is the love which is poured into the heart: Therefore we are righteous by infused love.

We must reply to the minor premise.

"Grace" in the proper sense of the word means free mercy or the free acceptance of us for the sake of Christ. For when it is said that through grace we have the remission of sins, you must understand this to mean that because of the virtues which have been given to us we have the remission of sins, a statement which clearly overturns the entire position of Paul and takes all true comfort from our consciences. For we must not look at our own qualities when we are troubled over the remission of our sins, but we must flee to our Mediator. In this struggle our hearts are also aided by the Holy Spirit, as Paul says, "He has given us the Spirit in whom we cry, 'Abba Father,' " Rom. 8:15, and He teaches us that the Holy Spirit is given to us in such a desire of faith, Gal. 3:14, "That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Therefore with this acceptance is joined the giving of the Holy Spirit, and yet it does not follow that we have reconciliation through these new virtues.

VI

It is impossible for us to know the will of God toward us: To believe that we are in grace is to affirm something regarding the will of God toward us: Therefore we seem to be affirming something impossible when we say that we must believe that we are in grace.

I reply:

The major premise is true regarding the will which has not been revealed through the Word of God. But it is certain in the Gospel that the Son of God has declared from the bosom of the eternal Father the command that we should affirm that God is favorable toward us for the sake of the Mediator. But the human mind, pressed down by the darkness of its nature, thinks under the rule of work-righteousness that that man is insane who affirms that he has a God who is favorable toward him. As over against these imaginings you should know that this is the Word which is given us in the Gospel, that the Son of God has been sent, and the promise given that we should believe in Him and affirm this fact.

But you say that the condition of the fulfillment of the Law has been added. I reply: Although repentance is necessary, yet the remission of sins does not depend on our worthiness, but is sure because of Christ. David after his fall repented and determined that he had truly been received back into grace upon hearing these words, "The Lord has put away your sin." The administration of the Gospel brings the same word to individuals who are repenting, and the commandment is immutable that we must believe in the Son of God. "Hear Him," Matt. 17:5. Therefore, although this statement seems absurd to the human mind, yet we should oppose the imaginings of our reason with the promise and command of God, so that we truly learn to call upon Him. For where this faith, which believes that we are received by God and heard by Him for the sake of our Mediator, is not present, then there is no worship. Therefore the doctrine which commands us to doubt is a heathen doctrine which takes away true worship.

VII

No one is pleasing to God unless he has new attitudes which have arisen from the Holy Spirit: No one can affirm that he has these attitudes because they can be virtues similar to those which come from human reason: Therefore no one can affirm that he pleases God.

The minor premise must be denied.

For although we must not make a determination regarding our reconciliation on the basis of our own attitudes but on the basis of the sure promise of God, yet when our heart is guided by faith in its fears and repentance, new spiritual desires truly are created by which in our prayers we cry, "Abba Father," and yet our trust fixes its eyes on the Mediator and not on our renewal. I always add this other point also so that our will does not persevere in its desires contrary to conscience. For this reason John says in 1 John 3:21–22, "If our heart not condemn us, we have confidence in God that whatever we ask we shall receive from Him."

VIII

The theological virtues, faith, hope, and love, are separate and distinct: If "faith" means "confidence," then it is the same as hope: Therefore the distinction of these virtues is lost.

I reply:

We confess that these virtues must always be joined together, and when we say that a man is justified by faith, we have already said above that this is to be understood in a correlative sense. It does not mean that we are righteous because of the worthiness of this virtue, but because of the Mediator. Therefore, just as faith differs from the other virtues because it is that which lays hold on and applies the promise to us, likewise it differs because it wills to receive the reconciliation which is present. But hope looks forward to the future deliverance. If we keep this in mind that we are saying that through the Mediator remission of sins is given to us, as all the godly certainly confess, then the explanation is easy and the way of avoiding these tricky points of casuistry is easy. If they include among the theological virtues that there is a need not only for knowledge, such as the devil himself has, but also faith by which we draw near to God and call upon Him in prayer, we, however, do not draw near in true sorrows if we judge that we must forever remain in doubt. For this doubt puts us to flight and creates hatred toward God, as it says in Romans 7 in regard to the sins which take place through the Law.

IX

Evil works merit eternal punishments: Therefore good works merit eternal life. The consequences seem to be valid because the points are contrary.

I reply:

The consequences would be valid, if the contrary points were completely comparable. Many things are completely in opposition to the law of God, and even when they are good they do not satisfy the law of God. For there remains in the saints a great weakness, even when there is no blemish in a person's outward obedience and there are many outstanding virtues present, as in Isaiah and other men. Yet there remain many inner evils, doubts in our prayer, many wicked drives, false confidence, and lack of trust. Likewise there are the specters which the devil raises to oppose us, to hinder our prayers, things which Paul calls "the fiery darts of the devil," Eph. 6:16, by which even those who excel in goodness are injured, so that they prefer to die rather than admit their wounds, as Paul complains in 2 Corinthians 12 about the thorn in the flesh which he had received from the devil; or note his words in Romans 7, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" In these miseries the godly recognize their own weakness and see that they do not satisfy the law of God, that they are never without sin; and in this humiliation they take refuge in the One who has made propitiation. The hypocrites know nothing of such struggles for they dream that outward behavior is the fulfillment of the Law.

X

Sin is hatred of God: Therefore righteousness is love of God.

We must agree with the entire argument, but we also have to consider at the same time that these contrary points are not completely parallel. For our love is weak and still hindered by many spots and blemishes and, as I have said above, "the fiery darts of the devil" come upon us which also hinder our worship, as happened to Moses at the rock. Therefore our love does not satisfy the law of God, nor does it please God because of its own perfection, but our love pleases Him because of the Mediator, as said above.

Therefore, when they say that love is righteousness and therefore we are righteous by our love, the answer has to be this: This is the case if the expression "we are righteous" means that we have virtue, which, as the philosophers say, validates the consequences; but if the term means receiving the remission of sins, then it does not validate the consequences. For the term "righteousness" cannot be understood in the first statement as referring to something which merits the remission of sins, but as referring to a virtue, as if I should say: to pay a merchant is righteousness: therefore he who pays a merchant is righteous. Such lines of argumentation can be easily evaluated by thinking people.

XI

Righteousness is in the will: Faith is not in the will: Therefore we are not justified by faith.

The same point has been dealt with above by merely changing a few words, yet I am stating the case in this form in order that the learned may give the matter

careful thought. First, we must deny the minor premise. For "faith" means to assent to the promise of God which is in the intellect, and with this assent there must of necessity be joined trust in our will which wills to receive the promise of reconciliation and rests in the Mediator who has been shown to us. For unless at the same time we will to receive and do receive the promise of reconciliation, flight and shame remain with us, and peace and quiet in our conscience and heart do not remain. Therefore by the term "faith" we embrace the Gospel and will to receive the promise which is offered.

Now, although this idea is displeasing to our adversaries who are contending sharply that by the term "faith" is understood nothing except the kind of knowledge that devils have, yet it is impossible for such knowledge to be in agreement with the statement, "Having been justified by faith we have peace," Rom. 5:1, or "He who believes in Him shall not be put to shame," Rom. 9:33.

Next, I want to give this warning again, which has been stated over and over again: The righteousness which is in us is in the will. But "to be justified" in this context means to obtain from God the remission of sins and acceptance unto eternal life. These things come to us for the sake of the Mediator who sits at the right hand of the eternal Father, but yet these blessings must be received by faith. And at the same time the Holy Spirit is given who begins in us new light and new virtues by which we subject ourselves to God and by which there is begun in us eternal life, as Christ says, John 17:3, "This is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and that the Jesus whom You have sent is the Christ."

Some people imagine that we must be in a state of doubt concerning our reconciliation, and they say that a man is righteous by reason of his own virtues, but this is a heathen notion and they do not draw near to God in trust in the Mediator, since God does not want to be worshiped and is not willing to hear in any other way than by those who invoke Him through trust in the Mediator.

XII

James 2:24, "You see, therefore, that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone."

I reply without any sophistry:

It is evident that "faith" in this passage in James refers to the knowledge of the historical facts such as the damned also possess. For he says, v. 19, "The devils believe and tremble." Furthermore it must be confessed, and we do clearly confess, that a man is not righteous by this knowledge. But Paul, when he is speaking of faith, understands confidence in God's mercy which relies on the Mediator and for His sake receives reconciliation. Therefore we must understand "faith" in one sense in Paul, when he says in Rom. 10:10, "With the heart man believes unto righteousness," and in another way in James 2:19, where he says, "The devils believe." Therefore James is not in conflict with Paul but is speaking about something else and refuting the error of those who imagine that they are righteous on account of their profession of the dogmas, as this opinion can easily take over the minds of inexperienced men. In the same way the Jews imagined that they were righteous on account of their profession of their doctrine and their ceremonies. It is necessary to refute this error.

Nor does this refutation conflict with Paul, when James adds, "A man is justified by works," for he is speaking of the righteousness or works which Paul also proclaims with great emphasis as being necessary; but he denies that remission of sins is given on account of this righteousness. Therefore the word "to justify" should not be understood as being the equivalent of reconciliation, but as we have often said elsewhere, it means "to be approved." A man is justified by his works, that is, he has a righteousness of works which is approved and which pleases God. That obedience is necessary in the reconciled and how it is pleasing to God has been said above. The person is not righteous or pleasing or accepted if he lacks this obedience and if sins against conscience remain. Therefore the statement that a man is obliged to have the righteousness of works must be confessed by us. But in the meantime the hearer must also learn some other things, namely that he does not receive the remission of sins because of his works, or that they are pleasing to God, for they do not satisfy His law, but they are pleasing only for the sake of the Mediator. It is clear that he must add these points.

Thus it is very apparent that James is not disputing about the entire matter but has spoken about only one aspect; he is demanding the righteousness of works and refuting those who imagine that they are righteous merely on the basis of their profession. But with regard to reconciliation and how our imperfect obedience is pleasing to God—of this he does not speak at this point, but above in ch. 1:18 he alludes to this matter a little when he says, "Of His own will God begot us with the Word of truth, that we should be the first fruits of his creatures."

XIII

1 Cor. 13:2, "If I have all faith, but do not have love, I am nothing."

The reply to this is straightforward, easy, and clear: I grant the entire point. For we clearly affirm that love must be present, but it does not follow from this that we receive reconciliation on account of our love, and that our love is pleasing to God on the grounds that it satisfies the Law. Indeed, love cannot exist unless faith precedes it, and it is by faith that we receive remission of sins and learn to recognize God's mercy and to determine that we have been accepted by God and are heard by Him. Thus love is kindled and the will subjects itself to God. But this love and subjection are

still weak and still stained by many blemishes. Thus it is a far different thing that Christ has made propitiation and on account of Him a person determines that he has sure and certain reconciliation. We look to Him and not to our own qualities.

Thus both points are true: Love must be present and yet a person must have reconciliation on account of the Son of God. We can use this simple response to avoid longer quarells when we see them coming. For here it is customary also to debate other points, such as, that "faith" means the gift of performing miracles, or that "love" means only the love for our neighbor. But I am omitting these ideas, since they are already sufficiently clear.

XIV

Matt. 19:17, "If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." Therefore it is possible to satisfy the Law and our obedience merits eternal life.

I reply:

Our adversaries have established their errors by the use of this passage that man can satisfy the law of God and that the wickedness which is born with us is not an evil which is in conflict with the law of God, and that because of our fulfillment of the law the price of our eternal life has been paid. These errors have arisen because they did not distinguish the Law from the Gospel. The Law requires complete obedience, and it promises life on the condition of complete obedience, as it has been said,"This do and you shall live," Gal. 3:12. But it is evident that no one satisfies the law of God, as Paul clearly testifies in Romans 7 and 8. Therefore we must compare the passages under discussion here with other statements which properly apply to the Gospel. Rom. 6:23, "The gift of God is eternal life through Christ." And John 6:40, "This is the will of Him who sent Me that everyone who believes in the Son shall have eternal life." This is a different voice from the statements of the Law which are to be interpreted out of the Gospel. For although there is a difference, yet the law is not abolished, but as Paul says, "We establish the Law through faith," Rom. 3:31. For although our weak nature does not satisfy the law of God, yet God wills for the sake of His Son to receive us and to make us heirs of eternal life, and this takes place through faith. And when we are received, then the new light and the new obedience do begin which are in agreement with the law of God. And although this beginning does not satisfy the law of God, yet it is pleasing to Him for the sake of the Mediator, as said above. Thus it is obligatory that the commandments of God be observed, and to this same point Paul says in Romans 3, "We establish the Law through faith," that is, when we are by faith grafted into Christ, our obedience is pleasing to Him and our love toward God is begun.

Therefore to all the words of the Law add the Gospel. "If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments," that is, according to the voice of the Gospel or according to the spirit which the Gospel adds. You cannot begin to love without a knowledge of Christ and without the Holy Spirit. Nor does our obedience please God because it satisfies the Law, but on account of the Mediator, and yet this beginning is necessary, as Paul says, "We are clothed with our heavenly body, and thus are not found naked," 1 Cor. 5:3. Likewise Christ says in Matt. 5:20, "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." The Pharisees were teaching outward discipline. But the voice of the Gospel which speaks of repentance adds more; the righteousness of the godly must abound and exceed in these six areas: repentance, faith, renewal of spirit, true worship, advancing in our calling, and contending against the devil. For this new light is the beginning of eternal life which is and will be the kind of life, the kind of wisdom and righteousness which the Law demands, that is, a full knowledge of God and pure love for Him. Therefore it is said in Jer. 31:33, "I will put My law into their hearts," that is, I will kindle true light and obedience unto salvation, which will be for them eternal wisdom and righteousness.

XV

Forgive and it will be forgiven you, Matt. 6:14: Therefore our forgiving spirit merits remission of sins.

I reply: This statement preaches of repentance, like many in the prophets: Is. 1:17–18, "Cease doing evil . . . though your sins be as scarlet, you shall be whiter than snow"; 58:7–8, "Break your bread to the hungry . . . and the glory of the Lord will gather around you." These and similar statements contain two parts: One is the word of command ordering us to change our ways and the other is the promise of the remission of sins. And now in regard to the promise we must listen to the Gospel. Isaiah does not say that we should cease doing evil things and remission will be given you because of your virtues. Indeed, in another passage he clearly says of Christ, "Truly He has borne our griefs," Is. 53:4.

Thus in this statement, "Forgive and it shall be forgiven you," the first part is a commandment. The second part contains the promise; but it is not added that because of your forgiving spirit your sins are remitted to you. But rather if this condition must be added, then the promise is rendered uncertain as one can easily understand. Thus, when we have heard the promise, then our mind should look at the teaching regarding the remission of sins which has been promised freely for the sake of Christ. It means that this work is required, namely our forgiving spirit, that just as our other works are pleasing to God, as said above, not because there is then no evil in our mind, but because the pious mind fights against evil desires and hatreds because of the commandment of God and for the sake of harmony in the church, and it knows that this behavior is pleasing to God because of Christ.

Almost the same idea is found in Dan. 4:27, "Free yourself from sins by righteousness and alms for the poor, and there will be a cleansing of your iniquities." The whole speech preaches repentance in which the first part demands a changing of ways and does not speak only of alms but of a complete conversion: "Free yourself from sins through righteousness," that is, become righteous, acknowledge the true God who has revealed Himself in His Word which He has given to His people Israel and promised remission of sins for the sake of the coming Lord. Then as a result your governing also becomes righteous; you should be diligent in your justice, prohibit evils, punish the delinquent, defend the upright, do not be cruel to the church and the people of God. And finally all duties of a fair and beneficial government are included, then he says, "give alms to the poor," that is, give benefits to the poor. This first part is the voice of the Law which commands concerning the conversion of the king.

The second part, "There will be a cleansing of your iniquities," is a promise which must be received by faith. Therefore when He makes the promise, He also requires faith by which we believe that God makes His promise through mercy, not because of our worthiness. Nor was this some fleeting instruction, for when the king inquired how Daniel knew the will of God and from whence he could affirm with certainty that sins were truly remitted, Daniel without the slightest hesitance explained the promise which had been given by God regarding the future liberation and also in regard to eternal life, and he showed that this promise also pertained to the gentiles. Therefore he did not command certain ceremonies in order that he might thereby signify that reconciliation is given not on account of the Law but on account of the promise.

Therefore, although this account in Daniel is brief, yet the promise of remission itself instructs the godly reader regarding the universal promise of reconciliation and eternal life. And the thoughtful reader will understand that the account in Daniel is in agreement with the Gospel. The first part deals with the precepts concerning the amending of one's life and the later part is the promise which must be received by faith, by which we are assured that we have been received by God's mercy. These points are clear and sure for pious people and are entirely free of sophistry. Nor am I using this story to support the notion that good works merit the remission of present sins, even if it is true that Daniel was not talking only of the remission of the penalties but first of the remission of guilt. But Scripture often speaks of the remission of present penalties, for example, "alms deliver from death," Tobit 4:11 and 12:9, that is, our alms-giving merits that we are not pressed down by dangers. Honoring your father also brings about a placating of your sin, that is, insofar as it pertains to present punishment, if you will be kind toward your parents, teachers, rulers of the church, God will also mitigate your punishments.

XVI

The greatest virtue justifies most greatly: Love is the greatest virtue: Therefore, love justifies most greatly.

I reply: The major premise concerning the righteousness of the Law is true, that is, if we fulfill the Law satisfactorily, we would be righteous on account of our virtues, and the greatest virtue would contribute the most, so that we can truly say of Christ that He was righteous particularly because of His perfect love. But because we do not satisfy the Law, we are accepted before God on account of the Mediator and not on account of our own worthiness or our own qualities. Therefore the major premise is not valid in regard to our reconciliation. The greatest virtue reconciles most greatly; indeed, only the Mediator reconciles. It is the greatest virtue of all to burn with love for God, but even the regenerate and those who have advanced far scarcely believe that the smallest spark has been kindled in them since in their own minds faith struggles with doubt and the devil is upsetting their worship by various false ideas; so that in our heart the love for God still languishes, as we can sense in our prayers in which our heart either believes that it is negligent or even flees God, and wicked desires and love of pleasure, glory, and our own life rush in upon us.

Therefore, although love for God must exist in us, yet we acknowledge the enormous weakness in us and we know that our person has been received by God, heard by Him, and is righteous, that is, our person has been reckoned as accepted by God on account of the Mediator by faith. Thus it is one thing to speak of reconciliation and God's mercy toward us; it is another to arrogate these virtues to ourselves. For there is no question that love is the greatest of all virtues, and the Law requires it as the highest virtue, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart . . . ." But where is this burning flame of love? Scarcely a spark shines in the saints and it is retained with difficulty. If we consider these points, we will understand more clearly why it has to be said that we are justified by faith. Now if a person wishes to compare these virtues and to consider the individual definitions of each, there is some value to be gained from this. The first virtue is faith, which is to know the Word of God and to assent to the promise of grace. There is also trust, by which for the sake of Christ we determine that God is favorable toward us, so that we may rest in confidence. Therefore knowledge lays hold on the promise, and trust quiets our heart for the sake of the Mediator. Then follows love. For it is necessary that the knowledge of God's mercy comes first, since the heart truly senses the wrath of God and again by faith recognizes that God is favorable toward us for the sake of Christ. By this light the darkness of Epicureanism and the Academicians is driven away and our mind, aided by the Holy Spirit, determines that God really is concerned about us and that we are

received by Him. Thus the heart begins to submit to God and love toward God begins. But in this life the kind of flames are not burning which we owe to God, but there is a certain degree of beginning obedience by which the heart does subject itself to God and rejoices in knowing and obeying Him. As it says in the canticle in Luke 2:14, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and happiness or good will among men." Thus John, in order to show in some way what our love toward God should be, says in 1 John 5:3, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." To these virtues we add, in the third place, hope which is properly the expectation of the coming deliverance promised by God. Hope differs from faith in two ways. The first is a noteworthy and significant difference. Faith lays hold on the promise and applies the Mediator to us. Hope is not like this, but awaits the future outcome. From this we can easily understand why it is not proper to say that we are justified by hope, because it is not the purpose of hope to demonstrate or apply the Mediator as when we say we are justified by faith. The second difference is this: Faith receives the present benefit, the present reconciliation without which there can be no calling upon God. Hope expects in advance the future events which have been promised by God.

XVII

"Her sins, which were many, have been forgiven her because she loved much," Luke 7:47: Therefore remission of sins takes place on account of love.

I reply: There is a twofold absolution. One is private, directed to the conscience which is struggling with the wrath of God. In this absolution we must understand that remission is received by faith and not on account of our virtues. Thus Christ says, "Your faith has saved you," Luke 7:50. Our faith does not rely upon our love but only on the mercy which has been promised, as is evident. Nor can love exist unless remission be received. The second kind of absolution is public, before the church. This takes place on account of good works which are testimonies of a person's conversion, as when Christ here explains to the Pharisee why He had received the woman, namely because there were evident testimonies to her conversion.

This entire account is a picture of the church. There are always two congregations. The one is hypocritical, puffed up by the authority which has been given to it and its reputation for righteousness, because it seems to be carefully observing the doctrine of discipline and the Law. And although this congregation does not cling to the Gospel, yet because it holds governance of the church, therefore Christ sat at its table, that is, he used its platform as a place to preach. The second congregation is the one which hears the Gospel, truly repents, and with true faith calls upon God, recognizes the Son as the Mediator, and proclaims the Gospel. To this congregation, although the other group has the outward appearance of works, Christ still gives in this passage praise for their love, a love which the hypocrites had taken for themselves by arrogating to themselves the righteousness of the Law. But Christ transfers this honor to this poor woman: the righteousness of the Law is pleasing here where there is the true knowledge of Christ. And in this congregation there is true worship, that is to say, repentance, faith, true calling upon God, love, kissing Christ's feet and washing them, that is, adorning and defending the ministry of the Gospel and the necessary zeal for the church, enduring dangers in confession and labors, and hatred in teaching. On the other hand, the hypocrites are without repentance or the fear of God because they think that they are righteous by their own behavior or their own ceremonies. Then they are also without faith, because they either trust in their own righteousness or remain in doubt. They are without love because love for God and true worship cannot exist unless there first be a knowledge of remission of sins. They do not honor the Gospel but try either to destroy or repress it. In this passage Christ sets before the godly His comfort, he sharply refutes the Pharisee and takes away from him all praise for his righteousness in order that He may show that He defends His church against the unfair judgments of the congregation of hypocrites.

But if this idea of the twofold absolution does not please you, then use another illustration. The idea of synecdoche has been suggested. Her many sins were forgiven her because she had been converted. Statements such as this occur in many places and yet the synecdoche must be explained. Although it is necessary that the many aspects of conversion do come together at one and the same time—contrition, faith, love or good intention—yet remission of sins is not given because of our worthiness but through mercy which is grasped by faith. This explanation is taken from Paul in his contentions for the term "freely, by faith for the sake of Christ."

XVIII

Eternal life is called a reward: Therefore it is owed to us because of our works.

My reply is very brief: Eternal life is a reward because it brings blessings even if it is given for another reason, namely for the sake of Christ. Just as an inheritance is a reward for a son, even if it comes to him for another reason. This reply is brief and simple and it satisfies the objection of our adversaries who are exaggerating the word "reward" out of all proportion and are drawing some ridiculous conclusions from it, such as placing works and reward either in the realm of the marketplace, or making the price and the reward equal. Thus they come up with the notion of equalizing our obedience with our eternal life, and speak of the obedience of the merit of our worthiness (*meritum de condigno*); they imagine that men can satisfy the Law and they mix it all up with works of supererogation. And

in regard to faith which does not look to our worthiness but to the Mediator and which receives the remission of sins and the inheritance of eternal life for the sake of Christ—of this they say nothing. Indeed, they teach the very opposite when they say that hope is the expectation of eternal life which comes from our own merits. Finally, the word "merit" has created many arguments, and Bernard, when he could not solve this problem, finally said, "It is sufficient to know regarding the word 'merit' that merit does not suffice." Thus the knowledge of his own infirmity compelled him to take refuge in Christ.

Therefore our explanation of this matter is simple. We say that it is necessary for salvation that there be repentance, faith, the beginning of obedience or love; and yet because there is still in our flesh a great darkness and weakness which conflicts with the law of God, we must acknowledge what David says, "In Your sight shall no flesh be justified," Ps. 143:2. We must flee to Christ and determine that eternal life is given to those who repent and believe for His sake. As He Himself says, "This is the will of the Father, that everyone who believes in the Son shall have eternal life," John 6:40. It is insanity to imagine that it is possible for the regenerate to satisfy the law of God and that they are thus without sin. Therefore, in order that our hope of eternal life may remain strong, we should know that it is given to those who repent and believe for the sake of Christ.

Meanwhile, however, because God does receive our obedience, even though our good works do not merit the remission of sins and the inheritance of eternal life, yet they do merit other rewards both physical and spiritual in this life and in the future, as Christ says, "Great will be your reward in heaven," Matt. 5:12. These things which I have said satisfy the wise and pious consciences.

This reply is also true: The statements, "The reward will be eternal life," Matt. 5:12, and "It shall be rendered to each according to his works," 2 Cor. 5:10, are statements of Law which speak of righteousness as well as of our own worthiness. And yet the faith which receives reconciliation determines that we are not pleasing to God because of anything else or because of our virtues, because no one satisfies the Law, and in this weakness of our nature many sins still remain. It is necessary to add an explanation from the Gospel which causes us to understand that merit is a compensation, but we must not understand that reconciliation is given on account of our worthiness, and that our beginning obedience is not pleasing to God in itself, but it is pleasing for the sake of the Mediator in those who have been reconciled. The compensation for good works only comes after this reconciliation.

But we must destroy the argument which some make that men will become slack and lazy toward well-doing if we take away from them the idea of merit. I have said above that the reasons for the necessity and obligation for good works are much more serious than this. Besides, we must maintain the difference in the promises. The promise of reconciliation and eternal life is a free promise; while the promises belonging to the Law are additions made for the sake of good works, such as the promise, "He who gives a cup of water shall not lose his reward," Matt. 10:42. Thus, even though good works do not merit reconciliation and are not the price of eternal life (for reconciliation must precede these things in order that our obedience may please God), yet they do merit some rewards, as we have said.

Further, what has been said regarding sluggishness must be refuted by raising the danger of doubting. If we must be in doubt regarding eternal life, as the teaching of these points regarding merits leads us to believe, then doubt will even more weaken our zeal for doing good. But I am passing over this point. There is a great darkness upon the human mind and a horrible weakness. Very few people understand what it is to serve God. But the pious have some degree of light. They thank God who has received us to Himself for the sake of His Son and that for the sake of the Mediator He has given His approval to this weak and corrupted obedience of ours and adorned it with rewards and aroused us to the exercises of faith and good works. For in these exercises these questions can easily be judged.

I have discussed this entire controversy regarding justification or reconciliation. And although many people oppose this position, yet it is the task of the godly mind to see what really is at issue so that the matter can most easily be judged, that the church of all ages may be alerted, and the experience of the saints carefully considered. We say that repentance is necessary, and we add that people must believe that the remission of sins is freely given for the sake of the Son of God, not on account of our own worthiness. Likewise the mind must not fall prey to doubt but in faith conquer doubt. Further we are saying that it is necessary that there be the beginning of obedience, but that this does not satisfy the law of God, but is pleasing to Him in the reconciled for the sake of the Mediator; and indeed sins do remain in the regenerate, but yet we are to distinguish sins which are contrary to conscience from those which remain in the saints. For we are saying that grace is lost when the law of God is violated against conscience. Not only are these ideas correct, but in fact they are in agreement with the consensus of all the saints from the very beginning.

Think of David when he was accused by Nathan. Here David acknowledges the wrath of God and is truly ashamed and grieves. Again, when he hears the Gospel, "The Lord has taken away your sin," he is governed by this word and does not think that he has the remission of his sin because of his virtues. But he believes the word and understands concerning the promises which have been given to the fathers, he struggles with

his doubt and conquers in faith. What happens then? Does he later come to the conclusion that he is satisfying the law of God? Indeed he recognizes that his weakness is far removed from the perfection of God's law. He therefore says, "In Your sight shall no flesh be justified," Ps. 143:2, and he knows that still through mercy this righteousness of a good conscience is pleasing to God in those who have been reconciled, as he says, "Those who love Your law have great peace," Ps. 119:165.

Our minds must carefully note these statements which are constant and irrefutable, in agreement with the consensus of the saints of all ages. Nor will it be difficult to refute the arguments which are used against them, if we keep these points before us and use them in our daily prayers. For there can be no true prayer unless we understand the doctrine of faith. For we must draw near to God in trust in the Mediator, Rom. 5:1, "Through Him we have access . . ." and Heb. 4:14 ff., "Having such a high priest, let us draw near with confidence."

Locus 10
The Difference between the Old and New Covenants

There is one ongoing church of God which has existed from the creation of man and the giving of the promise after the fall of Adam down to the present day, but the spreading of the teaching of the church has taken place in different places and under different kinds of government. It is profitable to consider in a chronological order the history and the testimonies in which God has revealed Himself from the very beginning and showed His wrath against sin and has declared His mercy to those who have turned to Him. For in order that we might know that the doctrine of the church is the only, the first, and the true doctrine, God in His special blessing willed that from the beginning this ongoing history should be put in writing and preserved, and to this book which was written through the work of the patriarchs and the prophets, He has added testimonies, along with the demonstrations of the great miracles, in order that we might understand whence and how the doctrine of the church has been spread abroad from the beginning of time. But later on the religions of the heathen arose, which here and there in an ungodly manner developed new gods and new forms of worship, when they had departed from the original teaching. Nor did the Greeks and other writers, who were of their religious persuasion, know the true God, but daily dreamed up horrible licentiousness, sometimes dealing with Bacchus and other times with Diana.

Thus we should understand that it is a great blessing of God that He has given to His church a certain Book, and He preserves it for us and gathers His church around it. Finally, the church is the people who embrace this Book, hear, learn, and retain as their own its teachings in their worship life and in the governing of their morals. Therefore where this Book is rejected, the church of God is not present, as is the case among the Mohammedans; or where its teachings have been suppressed or false interpretations set forth, as has happened among heretics. Therefore we must read and meditate upon this Book so that its teachings may be retained, as we are often commanded regarding the study of it, e.g., 1 Tim. 4:13, "Devote yourself to reading"; Col. 3:16, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly." The Holy Spirit testifies that it is His will that the doctrine and the divine testimonies be put in writing, e.g., Ps. 102:18, "This shall be written for the generations to come, and the people who shall be created shall praise the Lord."

Therefore we should love and cultivate the studies of this divinely given Book. First, we should know its substance and that there are two kinds of teaching contained in the entire Book, the Law and the promise of grace, which is properly called the Gospel. This distinction is a light to the entire Scripture and was taught even before Moses.

The Law is the knowledge planted in the mind of man in the creation, teaching that there is one God, the Creator of things, and that we must worship Him and render Him obedience in keeping with the difference between what is honorable and what is shameful and subject to punishment, which God Himself has impressed on the mind. For the image of God was in man and this image was the sure and certain knowledge of God and the knowledge of the Law, and in his will there was a turning to God. But although after the Fall the will was turned away from God and the knowledge in his mind was darkened, yet there did remain a knowledge that there is an eternal and immutable judgment of God against sin which testifies that God is angry with sin.

But after the Fall the promise of reconciliation is not the knowledge which has been inserted into our nature, but it is a voice brought from the hidden bosom of the Father which was previously unknown to all creatures, by which voice God testifies that He does receive men into His grace, that He will destroy sin and death, and that He will restore righteousness and life for the sake of the coming Seed of the woman. The proclamation of His birth began in paradise. The voice of the Law is the accusation against our disobedience. But the promise was this: "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." After this came the patriarchs, such as Adam, Seth, Enoch, and others who, by a legitimate call of God, exercised the priesthood and spread the true doctrine.

The Law which prohibits murder is expressly proclaimed in the preachment to Cain and later in the word repeated to Noah. The Law which prohibits vagrant lusts is sanctified in paradise and later the testimony is given concerning the judgment of God in the Flood and the destruction of Sodom. Likewise the promise becomes increasingly clearer, as when it is said to Abraham, "In your seed shall all the nations be blessed," Gen. 22:18.

Therefore what do we properly call the old covenant and the new covenant? For it has always been necessary to proclaim both the Law and the Gospel, and the voice of each has been the ongoing ministry in the church. I reply: The old covenant in the most proper sense is the promulgation of the Law, or the pact by which the people of Israel were bound to the Law and to this form of civil life for this purpose, that in this civil arrangement the promise of the coming Mes-

siah might be preserved and propagated, and for this reason in this people there was also the true church of the elect.

We must carefully consider this purpose which the ignorant multitude among the people of Israel failed to understand, for they fell into three errors:

1. Just as they saw the promise of the land as being the possession of a certain piece of real estate and a certain government as being purely physical, so they believed that the promised Messiah would increase this land area and strengthen it. They did not understand that He was sent to be the sacrifice, to abolish sin and death, and that through this government or nation He would give righteousness and eternal life to those who believed.

2. They did not understand the principal reason for the promulgation of the Law. For it was given not only as the civil law by which this nation should be ruled, but that it might be the voice of God given by sure and clear testimony by which the judgment of God was revealed as something eternal and immutable in its opposition to sin, so that the promise of the Messiah might be sought when the wrath of God became understood. But the great majority was entirely ignorant of this and thought that the Law was only a matter of civil obedience and that the law of God was satisfied by this external obedience. They did not understand inner sins or doubts about the wrath and mercy of God; they did not know about genuine shame or ardent faith and love; they did not understand about trust in God for divine help in their prayers or their doubts as to whether God really receives their prayers. They had countless erring notions. They believed that many of these things were not sinful and were not in conflict with the law of God.

3. They believed that sins and lapses were compensated for by sacrifices and that they merited the remission of sins by the killing of bulls and other ceremonies. Under this opinion they piled up sacrifices. Indeed, they even dreamed up new ones or took them over from the gentiles. They sacrificed their own children in order that they might merit more good things in times of great and difficult troubles. Human blindness is prone to such errors as this, so that it imagines that works which we ourselves have created out of our imagination are particularly pleasing to God. These three errors were widely spread among the people.

Yet God in this civil arrangement always preserved some true church, that is, a gathering of those who truly believe, as Isaiah says in 1:9, "If the Lord of hosts had not left us a remnant, we should have been as Sodom." Thus the true church attacked errors and called some back to the true worship of God; it taught that this civil structure had been established in order that there might be a definite and a sure place for the church, until the coming of the Messiah, with the result that in the meantime in this place the promise might be preserved and spread abroad. The church also bore witness that the Messiah was sent that He might make sacrifices for sin and give righteousness and eternal life, but not a worldly empire in this mortal life.

Furthermore the church taught regarding the Law that external obedience and discipline do not satisfy the law of God nor please Him, unless the true foundation has first been laid, that is, that we know the promise of the Messiah and for His sake receive the remission of sins and reconciliation. They taught in their worship that God for the sake of this Messiah truly did receive them and hear their prayers. By this faith they taught that there must be a beginning of obedience to this Law in the heart, that is, the statements of the Decalogue concerning love, worship, and the fear of God.

They proclaimed the same in regard to the ceremonies, that they were not merely given in order that they might be the price for the remission of sins; but that they might be signs of the coming Messiah and testimonies of their profession of faith and exercises which served as instruction regarding faith and worship; and they were not of value unless the foundation was first laid down that they knew the promise of the Messiah and had received the remission of sins and that there was the beginning of obedience to the first part of the Law, namely the Decalogue.

So also with regard to the third part of the Law, that is, the judicial aspects, they taught that the civil law was pleasing to God when the true foundation had been laid, namely knowledge of the promised Messiah and reception of the remission of sins and the beginning in the heart of the first part of the Law, that is, the Decalogue, in order that trust in divine aid and for the glory of God and love of our neighbor, the civil duties must also be performed, not as Alexander, Sulla Marius, and others carried out the laws—with contempt for God and solely for the sake of their own power and purposes.

In this way the prophets showed the promise and the use of the Law, and on the other hand attacked superstitions, as we read in Jer. 7:22, "I did not give command to your fathers regarding burnt offerings;" Ps. 51:16, "You do not desire sacrifice." These and similar passages seemed to be in open conflict with the Law and gave reason for ungodly kings and priests armed with the pretense of the Law to inflict cruel persecution on the prophets. But it was the will of the prophets that the ceremonies be not commanded unless there was also with them the knowledge and trust in the Messiah, repentance, or as it is said in common language, that the ceremonies not be done merely as a formality (*ex opere operato*) and accompanied by other errors which the ignorant multitude dreamed up.

That this establishment of the civil structure by Moses is properly called the old covenant is confirmed by such statements as these: Gal. 4:24 ff., "These are two covenants, the one from Mount Sinai which bears children for slavery," that is, which binds men to this civil structure, which even though it was a great bless-

ing (for it was most beneficial to know for certain that the church was there), yet there was slavery there, that is, the highest good had not yet been made known, the new and eternal life which was to be demonstrated as the true liberty in the new covenant. But there was the ministration of the Law preaching God's wrath against sin and compelling obedience, instructing the people by certain types and shadows regarding the blessings to come.

Thus Hebrews 7 shows that the old covenant was abrogated because it was weak and useless. It does not speak of the promise of the coming Messiah. This covenant was not useless to the patriarchs, but the Law was weak and useless, that is to say, for justification or for abolishing sin and death, for it was the purpose of the Law to do this. Although it was a great benefit that a definite location be given to the church on earth and that a beautiful civil structure and outward discipline be established, yet all these good things were things which perish, subject to death, and they were not righteousness or eternal life.

Jer. 31:31 ff. clearly calls the old covenant a treaty which was made when the people were being led out of Egypt, and in a very skillful way he distinguishes between the old and the new covenants. The old was the promulgation of the external law and a pronouncement of judgment against sin; it was the establishment of a political structure so that there might be a definite seat for the Word and testimonies of God. But the new covenant was not an external promulgation of the Law, but new and eternal life, light, and righteousness while the Law burned warmly in the hearts [by the abolition] of death and sin. Jeremiah includes the whole scope of the new covenant just as many of the prophets do when they speak of the blessings of the Messiah, and they not only instruct concerning the beginning but of the complete restoration of man's nature. Thus there is a clear distinction between the new and the old covenants, since the new covenant speaks of the heavenly and complete nature freed from all evils; and this is bestowed on our old nature which had been subjected to the Law and to death.

Here also we should refer those titles which have been applied. It is called the old covenant both with respect to time and because of the subject, for the promulgation of the Law preceded in time the restoration of our nature, something which begins with the resurrection of Christ and is to be completed when the entire church is raised and adorned with His glory. Second, it is called "old" because of the subject, because this old nature is pressed down by the judgment of the Law and must be coerced by the discipline of the Law. Just as our nature remains in this life, so the Law remains and the enormous burden which the Law denounces with its curses, that is, the eternal wrath of God remains, unless remission of sins is received through the Gospel. Further, there also remain the great calamities which are punishments by which God punishes the sins of all who are outside the church and in the church. Wars are created, diseases, poverty, devastations, exiles, injuries, desertions, betrayals, troubles on the part of friends, and finally countless sorrows. We should know that these chastenings do not happen by accident but they are the constant voice of the Law which is admonishing this wretched nature of ours regarding the eternal wrath of God and restraining and coercing our nature so that we should not think that by the destruction of the Mosaic civil structure the judgment of God and His curses against sin are no longer in effect. To be sure, the blessing and deliverance are begun in those who believe the Gospel and are thus freed from the eternal wrath of God; but as long as the old corruption of our nature remains, the punishments also remain.

For the voice of the moral law and the curses have been revealed not only to the people of that time, but that there might be the testimony and judgment of God against sin in all places against the entire human race. Therefore the old covenant is called a burden because it crushes the entire old nature, not only in the ungodly but also in the saints before their full deliverance. But for the saints there is consolation, help, and mitigation offered in the Gospel and to the same degree the curse is abrogated. But the ungodly perish in keeping with the curse, without deliverance, so that even many very outstanding men have perished horribly, crushed both by calamities of this life and the eternal wrath of God, men such as Saul, Pompey, Caesar, Crassus, and Cato, who are before us daily as examples in keeping with the whole history of the world. For since the nature of men is guilty, it is pressed down by the curses of the Law.

From these citations which I have quoted we can sufficiently understand how the nomenclature of the old and new covenants square with one another if we take into account the time of the promulgation of the Law and the matter of the complete restoration of our nature, especially if we take into consideration the fact that our old nature is crushed and coerced up until the time of its complete restoration. When we understand this, then individuals should realize that their troubles are a testimony to the Law by which we are instructed about the wrath of God in order that we may seek the Messiah; and they should also realize that a bridle has been put upon us to curb this old nature of ours.

The new covenant is the proclamation of the remission of sins and the giving of eternal life, and the giving of new righteousness with the destruction of sin and death, for the sake of Christ the Mediator. When it is called the new covenant we understand the beginning of this in every proclamation of the Gospel, from the very beginning of the giving of the promise, and we understand that this is brought to fulfillment in the entire church when it has been raised from death and puts on eternal glory.

The apostles saw an example of this great glory

above their heads and upon some of their members when they witnessed the ascension of the risen Christ. For there they saw that mortality had been completely abolished, they saw the new nature shining with divine light, new righteousness, and life. Jeremiah speaks this way concerning the new covenant, including not only the preaching of the Gospel before the resurrection but the complete blessing, 31:33–34, "I will put My law in their hearts, and I will be their God and they shall be My people; and no longer will each man teach his neighbor, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know Me . . . for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more." Here He seems to be contradicting Himself, for first He says, "I will make a new covenant," but the covenants are made with a certain terminology and speak in the language of ministration or a ministry through which God reveals His will, and often in other places it is said that in the new covenant a new word must be proclaimed. For example, Is. 61:1, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to preach good tidings to the afflicted. He has sent me," but later we read in Jer. 33:34, "No longer will each man teach his neighbor." Here He is saying that the ministry of the word preached by man will cease. These points, if properly applied, are in agreement.

For the new covenant begins in this mortal life through the ministry of proclaiming the promise in all ages, but it is entirely completed when the light has been shed abroad, along with righteousness and eternal life in which the ministry of teaching the commandments to men has ceased and we rejoice before the sight of the eternal God. But in the meantime even if the new covenant is beginning among the regenerate, yet because our old flesh remains, as said above, it is terribly oppressed by the curses of the Law, that is, by calamities of every kind, in order that the wrath of God against sin may be understood and the Mediator sought; likewise, that sin may be crushed and punished. Therefore, as we have often said above, the church is oppressed with very great troubles because particularly in the church God wants His wrath against sin to be seen clearly. Thus in the end the church will completely strip off its sin and be freed from all penalties and adorned with eternal life and glory, as shown in these words: "Their sin will I remember no more," Jer. 31:34.

Likewise in 2 Corinthians 3, Paul distinguishes the new covenant from the old and brings us the most important teaching and the sweetest comfort. The teaching is that he calls the old covenant "the letter" and "the ministration of death," vv. 6–7, that is, the Law in its accusation and condemnation of man. But he calls the new covenant "the ministration of the Spirit," v. 8, that is, the proclamation of the Gospel through which the Holy Spirit is given, who begins in the heart the new light, righteousness, and life, as it also says in Rom. 8:15, "You have received the Spirit of the adoption of sons whereby we cry, 'Abba! Father!' "

When we know mercy through the Gospel, our minds no longer flee from God but draw near to Him as to a Father, and as they draw near they are helped by the Holy Spirit, they pray, they believe, and rely on the promises, since they look upon God as having joined Himself to human nature by an eternal and immutable covenant when His Son was born of the virgin, that is, when the two natures, the divine and the human, were joined together in the Son, they hold evident testimony which shows that the human race is a matter of concern to God, when they hear His Son has been sent to be the sacrifice and the author of new and eternal life, as Isaiah says in 9:6, "the everlasting Father," to whom they flee for refuge; and this is the voice of the Gospel which is "the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes," Rom. 1:16, that is, through this power the Holy Spirit is given along with the beginning of the new and eternal righteousness.

This comfort is added: Some one may wonder why the glory of the new covenant is so greatly celebrated by the prophets, when that gathering known as the church which took place under the apostles never has such a settled order, such significant leaders, such great victories and miracles as are seen in the exodus from Egypt and the establishment of the Jewish civil state.

Paul supplies the answer to this: All this glorying took place in order that there might be testimonies not only to the civil government which was going to perish but also to the promise of the future eternal reign. They teach in order that we may believe that since God was with that nation which was going to perish, much more shall He be with His eternal kingdom. Human judgments stumble when they see the church as a dispersed and wandering flock without any human supports, without powerful rulers and finally without any order. Then people are tormented by this weakness and ask what is the benefit of the Gospel and the name of Christ when we feel nothing in ourselves of these new and wonderful gifts. Further, we are left in the midst of our troubles, just as the rest of the condemned people in this world.

Paul puts this point in opposition to these doubts: If the civil structure which was going to perish was the ministration of glory, "how much more glorious will be this ministration of eternal salvation," 2 Cor. 3:9, that is, it will be efficacious in those who receive the Gospel and it will be preserved in marvelous ways. We suffer in our hearts in the midst of so many tumults of human affairs; we are anxious for the church, for its doctrine, and the destruction of its learning. These dangers instruct us that the church is not preserved by human plans but by divine actions among the great overthrow and ruination of kingdoms. God wants us to consider these things and He wants us to seek His protection so that we are not torn apart in our hearts. He gives us the promise that His church shall remain on earth to the end of time, as Christ clearly says in Matt. 28:20,

"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." Now, since the church will remain, the Gospel must be glorious, that is, efficacious; the church must be protected by the marvelous works of God; the study of theological literature must remain even if in this last age of the world all things are weaker and more out of shape. We must comfort ourselves with these thoughts and continue in prayer.

There are in many places in the prophets several descriptions of the new covenant which we must mention along with the sufferings of Christ and His blessings, the remission of sins, and the eternal kingdom, that is, new and eternal righteousness and life, as Isaiah 53 says; cf. Dan. 9:24, "Seventy weeks are decreed concerning your people . . . to put an end to sin . . . to show everlasting righteousness." Again, v. 26, "The Lord shall be cut off." In these passages there is a brief summary of the points which are comprehended in the new covenant.

Likewise it says in Zech. 9:11, "You also by the blood of your covenant have sent forth your prisoners out free from the waterless pit" (Vulgate). This is a short statement and there are many like it in the prophets, but by means of comparison they become very clear. He calls the blood of the sacrifice the "blood of the covenant" through which we must establish and confirm the covenant regarding matters of eternal significance, that is, the blood of Christ. For the prophets knew that sins were not taken away by the blood of animals but that these sacrifices were signs of another Victim. "You have led out your prisoners," he says, "from the waterless pit," that is, from eternal death. The captives were those who were Your people and You led them out by means of blood, that is, by the sacrifice which had been promised, so that eternity might be restored to us, namely, God's wrath assuaged by the death of the Son of God. Thus this passage includes the death of Christ and eternal blessings.

Next in ch. 12 Zechariah explains what kind of kingdom this is and what particular kind of actions it will produce. V. 10, "I will pour out upon the house of David the Spirit of grace and prayer." Here He speaks of good things which belong to the new covenant. The Spirit of grace is the Holy Spirit by whom our hearts are aided so that they may know Him when they hear the Gospel and believe that they have been received into grace and may be assured that the wrath of God has really been assuaged. But afterwards, when they come to know His mercy, they pray and he particularly calls it prayer because this is the worship which belongs to the church alone and is absolutely unknown to all those who do not know the Gospel.

At the same time that this teaching and comfort is being given to us, we are instructed that we must pray; and this means that our worship is pleasing to God and will not be in vain. These descriptions and others like them in the prophets are very useful and give us instruction regarding the new covenant and its blessings which we must look at closely, since we may apply these marvelous comforts to our needs and thus we will call up the Spirit of prayer.

When they speak of the new covenant, most of the prophets preach at the same time of present and eternal punishments of the ungodly, for example, Amos 9:8–9, "Behold, the eyes of God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it . . . but I shall not utterly destroy the kingdom of Jacob. For lo, I will give the command and I will shake the house of Israel among all the nations, as wheat is shaken with a sieve, yet not a grain shall fall to the ground. All the sinners of My people shall die by the sword. In that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David . . . " that is, while I am gathering for Myself the church, at the same time with frightful punishments I shall declare My wrath against the ungodly; and when their kingdoms have been destroyed, I will rescue and preserve a small select group. Thus when Jerusalem has been destroyed and the nation of the Jews dispersed, a remnant shall be rescued by the preaching of the apostles and afterwards, when even the Roman Empire has been destroyed by civil and foreign wars, still the church will be gathered. And now the most frightful actions of kingdoms and murders are the fatal punishments of the world, among which God still rescues His church and He will also glorify the whole church at the same time that He casts the ungodly into eternal punishments.

Isaiah 65 describes the new covenant in these words regarding prayer and proclamation, "I said, 'Behold Me,' to a nation which did not know My name," v. 1. Then in regard to the punishments of the ungodly he says, vv. 11–12, "You are those who have forsaken the Lord . . . you shall bow down to the slaughter." Yet He also says, "I shall save the church, so that if one grape is found, I shall not destroy the whole place." In regard to the fulfillment of the new covenant He adds, v. 17, "I create new heavens. . . ."

These statements of the prophets must be studied in order that we may distinguish between the beginning and completion, so that we not be torn apart by the sad sight of these empires rushing to their destruction and think that the church of God no longer exists. Rather we should understand that in the midst of these horrendous confusions we must still seek and retain the Word of God, and that those who join themselves with the true church by their faith, their will, their prayers, and their confession, are members of the people of God wherever they may be, even if they are crushed by slavery and death among the overthrowing of kingdoms. In this present day they all understand that this comfort is necessary for the godly. For even sane people are often troubled by this kind of trial: Has God completely rejected those nations where church structure no longer exists? Here many people fall into despair when they see a few godly people struggling in an overwhelming contest. Describing sorrows of this kind Hosea says in 13:13–14, "The sorrows of a tra-

vailing woman shall come upon them . . . I will redeem them from the power of death, O death, I will be your death." What he calls "the sorrows of a travailing woman" reasonably intelligent people can understand when they are troubled at the sight of the Turks with their pillage and their other attacks and uproars in many places; but comfort is added which will encourage the godly to take refuge in the promise of the new covenant; "O death, I will be your death," and again, "Every one who who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved," Joel 2:32.

I have said what the new covenant is and shown that we must consider which statements are speaking of the beginning and which of the consummation. For it is called the new covenant both because of the promise which was given after the fall and because of the beginning of new and eternal righteousness and life, blessings which will be given to us in their completeness after the resurrection. But now the church in the weakened condition of our nature is subject to the cross and all the empires of the world are attacking it with frightful punishments, and this will continue to the end. Therefore even if the state of Israel has been destroyed and with it the ceremonies and civil laws have been brought to extinction, yet the voice of the Law which judges sin, that is, the voice of the Decalogue, always remains in force, and the punishments also remain, but they are mitigated for the godly.

Just as in the civil structure of Israel God promised peace to the people and other blessings if they would obey, so the church, although it is a little flock in a hopeless condition and has neither power nor any definite geographical center, yet because it needs food and shelter for this life, it has the promises not of a definite location but of shelter and nourishment of a general kind.

Therefore we should prudently apply the examples of the punishments and blessings of Israel to our own life, so that just as they were polluted by idols, lusts, and other crimes and were punished, so now punishments fall upon all those who have become polluted because the judgment of God against sin is the same in all ages and the examples which have been given are universal for all the human race as the voice of the Law; and they speak to all ages and urge us to repent. Then also David, Isaiah, and many others in calling upon God are heard and defended in their calling. So also now we should understand that God will give shelter to His church when it is scattered, just as in days gone by He gave to Elijah in his exile the place of refuge at the home of the widow of Zarephath.

Yet we must realize that there is a difference, that no kingdom has been promised to us, no special location in this world has been promised, but we do know in a general way that God in this life will give shelter to His churches and to the studies of His Word, just as to Christ at the time of His birth lodging was given in the manger. On this point Paul says in 1 Tim. 4:8, "Godliness has the promise of the life which now is and of that which is to come."

It is profitable to understand why the promises of bodily blessings were given. We can mention three reasons:

First, that the ravings of the Epicureans might be refuted, that is, so that we do not get the idea that physical blessings come to us either by accident or by the natural order of things, without the help of God; but may determine correctly that God is concerned about these good things and that God does give us shelter, government, our home, peace, food, success in our endeavors. Often such instruction as this is given, as is found in Ps. 127:1, "Except the Lord build the house . . ."; and in Ps. 128:1–2 we read, "Blessed are all who fear the Lord. You shall eat the labor of your hands"; 37:19, "In the days of famine they shall eat their fill." Christ says in Matt. 6:33, "Seek first the kingdom of God . . . and all these other things shall be given to you in addition." He even commands us to ask for daily bread, and in Deut. 8:3 ff., God afflicted the people with want and gave them bread, in order that He might show that "man does not live by bread alone but by every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God." Of Isaac it is said in Gen. 26:12–13, "He sowed in that land and received in the same year a hundredfold, and the Lord blessed him and he was greatly enriched." Gen. 28:20, "If God will be with me, and keep me and give me bread . . . ." Finally, testimonies are spread everywhere regarding the help which God gives to this physical life of ours to defend us and to aid us with necessities.

The second reason that the promises of physical blessing have been given to us is that we may know that God will protect His church in this life. For in the great number of dangers which surround us we need this comfort.

The third reason is that our faith and calling may be strengthened in asking and waiting for these necessities, that our knowledge of the goodness and presence of God may increase along with our gratitude. Thus Paul says in Rom. 5:3–5, "Tribulation works patience and patience experience and experience hope, and hope is not put to shame." When Paul sees in the ship that his prayers were heard and that all the men were saved, even though the ship was destroyed, he recognized the presence of God and by this testimony his faith burned more brightly and he was moved to give thanks.

Thinking of things like this trains us also in praying for physical blessings. Let us also train ourselves in giving thanks. Although it is necessary that as individuals we be prepared for all calamities, yet in this practice of prayer there are two objectives. We pray for the whole body of the church and for ourselves. We ask that the entire church not be destroyed by wars, and we beseech God's blessings on the entire group throughout the world. Although evil is not always taken

away from every individual, yet we pray that it may be mitigated. Thus when the people prayed for David's army, they prayed first that the entire army might be saved and then they prayed for individuals who had prepared to obey even if they died in the struggle; but still they prayed for mitigation so that many might be saved or at least that they might have comfort from God, as was the case with Jonathan, who, although he was killed, yet was adorned and strengthened by God, and the side which Jonathan himself had hoped would win was finally victorious. I mention these points in order that we may learn in our praying to include not only ourselves but the entire church and all governments and by these practices men must always be instructed.

I have explained the distinction between the old and the new covenants because it is useful in the church to have a good understanding of this point. But finally the reader must be warned that the political structure established by Moses has been destroyed, so that the ceremonial and the civil laws have also been abolished (unless they are part of the natural law), and they have no more relevance for us than the laws of Solon. But just as the nature of man remains, so natural laws remain, such as the fact that people who are in the first or second degree of consanguinity should not marry. The Decalogue is among these natural Laws. It is the chief part of the law, the basis on which the rest is established. For God willed that the Decalogue be promulgated in order that there might be a sure testimony that the clear light of divine judgment against sin is in force over against the entire human race. Thus the people were led out of Egypt with so many miracles and were miraculously protected for so many years in the desert, in order that the presence of God might be seen and all these marvels recognized as the voice of the Decalogue which was not abolished but is the eternal and immutable judgment of God against sin.

Their sins are forgiven for those who take refuge in Christ because sin is displeasing to God, just as the eating of pork was to Him who had then forbidden it. This voice of the Law remains and is eternal: "God does not take pleasure in wickedness," Ps. 5:4. But He has poured out His great wrath against sin upon His Son who was put to death for us and paid our penalty. By the intercession of this payment we are received. But those who do not flee for refuge to the Son remain under condemnation by the voice of the Law and will perish. We shall explain these points more fully later on.

But even though the Levitical ceremonies have been abolished, yet they contain images of many of the blessings of Christ, but they require carefull treatment. For under a corrupt imitation of the Mosaic law many errors have taken root. In the Law the establishment of the order of priests was a very honorable thing. The high priest was established; some families were set apart for sacrifices, others in their turn were on hand for other special tasks relating to the tabernacle or the temple; they instructed the people, performed sacrifices, settled controversies on doctrine; they were well versed in sacred studies. Finally, there was no group of people in the entire human race which was more honored and venerated than this priestly society. For although there were often among them ungodly people and finally the Pharisees and Sadducees, yet because God had given to the family of priests His promises, there were always some godly men remaining among them, such as Jeremiah and later Simeon, Zacharias, and many others.

This example of a group who were the most honored of any people through the whole world certainly shows that in the church there has always been and will be the ministration of the voice of God through which He is efficacious and imparts eternal life. Likewise He instructs us that this ministry must be treated with reverence. But the principal function of this group is to set forth the Gospel, as is said in Mal. 2:7, "The lips of the priest should preserve knowledge and they should seek the Law at his mouth for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts."

Just as at one time the gentiles kept certain ceremonies although the teaching of Noah, Shem, and Japheth was lost, so the unlearned in these later times devise, in keeping with the image of the Levitical priest, a kingdom of priests in which even though the light of the Gospel has been darkened, they still give authority to the priest, to establish laws for their new worship; and in order to allude to the Levitical sacrifices they turn the Lord's Supper into a sacrifice of a certain order which they imagine is profitable for both the living and the dead by merely going through the motions (*ex opere operato*), that is, without any good intention on the part of the participant. These perversions and this zeal for wickedness must be condemned and we have to ask the question: What was the original use of the sacrifices and what did they really signify?

However there are many lovely images in the ceremonies which can give instruction to pious people regarding many points, but we need to be cautious that our interpretation is correct. There is a very appropriate picture of the church of all times, namely, the ark located in the holy of holies. This was called the "ark of the covenant."

Therefore first it was called "the ark of the covenant" to signify that this was the only people with whom God had made a pact by express word. Therefore when the Word was lost, then the people ceased to be the church of God; and finally only a few are truly the members of the church when they cling to the covenant by faith and in a sense enclose or fortify themselves in this ark in which they are not merely to contemplate the walls. But this term "covenant" or "treaty" means that in a sense God has made a pact with us and that we have been accepted by Him. You can thus see that by this term is signified the fact that

it is the church which clings to the covenant, that is, to the Word of God.

Second: In the ark were gathered the tables of the Decalogue by which is signified that the church must always be the guardian of those books of the prophets and apostles in which God reveals Himself. Therefore where the books do not exist there it is impossible for the church of God to exist, and the ark must be preserved for the sake of these books. Thus a church will always be preserved which will act as a guardian of these books. For first the profession and the guardianship of the book signifies that we are invited to preserve and read this book. Then it signifies what the church of God really is, as distinguished from the rest of the human race. The knowledge of God given to us in the Word shines in the minds of this group, and there is the beginning of obedience, and some day this obedience will be complete. Such will be the eternal people of God keeping Him in their minds, and when their nature has been completely restored, continuing to hold to the Decalogue; the church will burn with love for God with its whole body and whole mind, free from all evil desires.

Third: The ark was covered by a golden table which was called the mercy seat. This term signifies that the whole church is protected against the wrath and terrible judgment of God by our Mediator Christ, for whose sake—because He is the one who makes propitiation for us—God spares us, receives us, and keeps us. Without this shelter the nature of man would be crushed under the terrible burden of God's wrath.

There is also added the promise concerning this propitiation in Ex. 25:22: From this mercy seat God was going to speak to the people and there He would answer their prayer. Thus this table had the name of mercy seat or place of propitiation because there God wished to be invoked, and He gathered the people there so that new arks and temples would not be erected in other places. There are several types which apply here. Just as the mercy seat is the seat of God, so Christ is the seat of God, because in Christ the divine nature truly exists and before Him the church is gathered; and our prayers are not heard except for His sake, as it is written in John 16:23, "Whatsoever you ask the Father in My name He will give it to you." Therefore those who pray without knowledge of Christ or trust in Him will be rejected by God, as will all those who do not know the Gospel.

Above this mercy seat stood two cherubim with wings joined and facing one another. These signify the ministry of teaching under both the old and the new covenants. The wings are touching one another and the faces looking at each other, signifying the consensus of teaching in both covenants. The message of the prophets and the apostles is the same in regard to sin, the deliverance through Christ, eternal life, and finally the true knowledge of God and the true worship of Him. The whole ceremonial aspect of the ancient sacrifices typified the one sacrifice of the Son of God who was made a victim for us, endured the wrath of God which was poured out upon Him as if He Himself had committed our sins. No angels and no men can adequately describe the enormity of this wrath, sorrow, shame, and ignominy, but yet our minds must be moved to think of such things. Further, these cherubim instruct us that there is no church where the ministration of teaching the doctrine of the prophets and apostles is not present. The carrying of rods and the rings also signify the ministers, teachers and scholars of the church. Although this service on our part is imperfect and far inferior to the government of the ungodly, yet we should know that it is pleasing to God and necessary for the human race and that it is marvelously defended and aided by God among the terrible torments of life. Thus it is full of genuine dignity, and when we think of the importance of this work of ours, we should be eager to adorn our activity with diligence, patience, and modesty; and in the face of all perils we should sustain ourselves with the promises, "Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age," Matt. 28:20, and "Upon this rock I will build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," Matt. 16:18.

Furthermore, although we are, as Paul says in 2 Cor. 4:7, "earthen vessels," wretched men, weak, needy, poor, yet "We are ambassadors for Christ," as Paul says, 2 Cor. 5:20, a role which God will surely defend as He declared in the calling of many of the prophets and apostles, indicating that this work is important to Him. Note the great miracles attached to the call of Isaiah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, and Paul. These things did not happen by mere accident, nor did they apply to those men only, but these testimonies are useful for the whole church for they show that the Gospel is truly the voice of God and that God is concerned about His servants. This is sufficient instruction regarding the Levitical ceremonies to enable us to understand that these types refer to great things, and for the correct interpretation we absolutely must have a true understanding of the Gospel.

Finally, although the civil laws in no way pertain to us, yet in a general way they do instruct us that God is pleased with orderly civil life, contracts, the concept of government officials, courts, and punishment for crimes; and they demonstrate that godly people must exercise their faith, their confession, their patience, and their love in carrying out such duties. For as we said, above and beyond these works of civil righteousness we must hold to the foundation, namely the knowledge of the promises and faith and the beginning of obedience to the Decalogue.

Because the Mosaic political structure is the highest ideal and best form of civil order in this corrupt state of our human nature, it is useful for wise rulers to study this form of government. The laws of the gentiles were less stringent in two areas, in the matter of punishing blasphemies and in controlling our vagrant lusts. The

law of God established serious penalties against the worship of idols, blasphemies, ungodly teachers, and likewise against our erring desires. Therefore the will of God in regard to these sins must be studied by prudent rulers in the divine law itself.

Locus 11
The Difference between Mortal and Venial Sin

As Paul says in Rom. 7:9, "I was once alive apart from the Law," that is, I did not feel that I was being accused by the Law, nor was I ashamed, nor did I sense the wrath of God against sin. I did not consider how great the guilt of my sin was or the anger of God. Thus the great majority of men are secure and do not even give a passing thought to how great the guilt of their sin is, how great God's wrath is, although the penalties for the first fall and the enormous calamities of the whole human race are a daily reminder to us of the magnitude of the wrath of God; and even though the intercession of Christ along with His death is a witness that God is seriously and truly angry at sin. The hearts of the godly to some degree are moved by these witnesses, for they feel the greatness of His anger to some extent and do seek a mitigation of the punishments, such as in the statement of Ps. 6:1, "Do not rebuke me, Lord, in Your anger"; or Hab. 3:2, "In Your wrath, Lord, remember Your mercy"; Jer. 10:24, "Correct me, O Lord, in judgment but not in Your anger, lest You reduce me to nothing." To some degree they understand the difference between venial and mortal sin. Men who are carnally secure, drunk with pleasures, do not understand this difference and therefore many writers are hallucinating on this subject.

Moreover, although the magnitude of the wrath of God cannot be described in words, yet for the sake of teaching this subject, we must hold to these definitions: Mortal sin in a general sense is the defect or inclination or action contrary to the law of God, which offends Him, which is not forgiven, but merits the wrath of God and eternal punishment. Thus in the unregenerate there are mortal sins, the very disease of our origin and all wicked desires and perverted actions. Although the virtue of Pomponius Atticus and Seneca was very great and they did not want to harm anyone, indeed were very kind and did not pollute themselves with lusts, did not defraud in their business dealings, yet in their minds they had doubts concerning providence, they did not call upon God but actually railed against Him when they saw that in the great trouble of this life, the good were often overlooked. This darkness in their heart is a great sin which men still do not recognize. Since their hearts are turned away from God, even the virtues of such unregenerate men are polluted and not properly governed. Atticus does good, but not for the sake of God. The bravery of Alexander was a gift of God along with his other outstanding virtues, and the things he did were aided by God, but Alexander himself did not have as his goal that he should serve God or that the true knowledge about God should be spread under his guidance. Indeed, he did not actually believe that his own hand was guided by God in his warfare, but was of the opinion that the Macedonians had arisen by accident and by their own power. Therefore he neglected God and thought too highly of himself, wanted to be worshiped as a god, killed his friends when he did not think they sufficiently admired him, and fell into shameful lusts. These disgraceful things show how impure the heart of man was. Thus the impurity of their hearts corrupted their virtues and later produced manifest crimes.

Furthermore, although Nero and Epicurus sinned much more grieviously than Cato, yet they all were crushed by horrendous mortal sins and by the eternal wrath of God. It is not necessary for the unregenerate to inquire into the distinction between mortal and venial sins, because "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," Rom. 14:23. Cato is without light in his invoking of a god, he flees God, he rages against Him when he sees that although his cause is more righteous (as he sees it), yet he is passed by. At this point all his belief regarding a god is swept away. Therefore all his actions are condemned. But for the regenerate it is necessary to ask the question who has venial sins and why the fall from these are called mortal sins.

Therefore, although the regenerate, in whom has been kindled the knowledge of Christ, faith, and the true prayer and in whom the new obedience has been begun, are righteous, are pleasing to God, and have His Holy Spirit, yet in them there still remains in this life a great infirmity, that is to say, a darkness in the mind regarding God and in the will and heart a corrupt inclination and many wicked desires. Perverted doubts come into our mind about God; and trust, fear, love, and all the other virtues are much weaker than they ought to be. Meanwhile we make more of ourselves than we should and we produce in ourselves pride and self-confidence. By this pride and self-confidence of ours we irresponsibly start to move things which ought not be moved, as in the case of Josiah, a godly and holy king, who declared war on Egypt when Egypt was offering peace. The saints often burn with unrighteous anger and hatred with flames of lust and wrath which they should repress. Likewise there are many sins of ignorance and omission among the saints, as David cries out: "Who can understand his sins?" Ps. 19:12. There is no function of man, ecclesiastical, civil, or domestic to which our human infirmity is equal.

These evils in the regenerate are contrary to the law of God, as Paul testifies in Romans 7; and godly men in their true sorrows to some degree do under-

stand how great this perversion is and the magnitude of the evils. But because the person who is received when knowledge of Christ is kindled in his mind and faith in his heart and the Spirit given, and because the person also recognizes his weakness, deplores it, is ashamed at the knowledge of God's wrath against his sins, seeks pardon, and fights back against the first flames of desire, for him these evils are venial sins, that is, they are forgiven, with the result that they do not drive out the Holy Spirit and faith, and the person remains in a state of grace. Paul clearly teaches this in Rom. 8:1, "There is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus," that is, even if sins are present in them, this weakness which I have mentioned, and evil desires, yet the person has been received by God and his condemnation taken away, as Paul says previously, "You are not under the Law, but under grace," Rom. 6:15.

But the statement is made: Nothing is sin unless it is an act of the will, but the darkness, doubt, sins of omission, the sudden unexpected desires which precede an act of judgment and an assent are not acts of the will or voluntary. This sophistry can be easily refuted, for the statement, "Nothing is sin unless it is an act of the will or voluntary," is speaking of civil law but not of the judgment of divine law. For the fact is that the darkness in the mind, the doubts, great and numerous omissions and the many and unexpected and sudden flames of desire are sins, even if they are not voluntary, as Paul says, "The evil which I do not want to do, that I do," Rom. 7:19. John is speaking of the same things when he says, "If we say that we do not have sin, we are liars," 1 John 1:8; for he is speaking of the weakness and wicked emotions which occur in the regenerate, not of their actual falls which are against conscience, that is, when they voluntarily indulge in corrupt desires.

Thus Paul also makes a distinction between the sins of those who remain in grace and those who reject grace, Rom. 8:13, "If you live according to the flesh, you shall die, but if through the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live," that is, if your will gives in to depraved lusts and turns itself away from God knowingly and willingly is contrary to the commandment of God, refuses to repent, to fear God, and to believe Him, which is pleasing to God, your will does harm to your mind, so that it cannot call upon God and with the loss of grace and the Holy Spirit it again turns back to death, that is, it draws down upon itself the wrath of God and eternal punishment, just as Adam and Eve, when they fell, lost grace and brought upon themselves the terrible anger of God. But if by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live. He calls the depraved desires and negligence of our wicked nature "the deeds of the flesh." But then he continues by saying that we shall be victorious, that is, we shall retain grace and the Holy Spirit, if we contend against these wicked desires. This point is explained more clearly in other passages, where it is prescribed that there be in the regenerate the righteousness of a good conscience. 1 Tim. 1:5, "The purpose of the commandment is love that issues from a pure heart, a good conscience and sincere faith."

Therefore we should fight back and be on guard that we do not knowingly or willingly give way to evil desires or indulge ourselves with them. There is in us an impenetrable darkness which grieves us very much, and there are many evil forces which precede our will or capture it for a while, as Paul says in Rom. 7:23, "I am brought into captivity by the sin which wars in my members." At this point if you fight against sin so that you do not give way against your conscience, you shall retain grace and the Holy Spirit.

These sins are not perplexing and there is no need in a subtle or Stoic manner to measure the degrees of consensus. For the weak will is captured even before it realizes it, but we must look at this fact (which can be easily understood and judged) so that we do not indulge in this knowingly but fight against it; and Paul adds in Rom. 8:13 the words "by the Spirit," that is, if we live with the true desires to repent, to fear and to love God, and if our will is ashamed when it learns of the wrath of God, deplores its weakness, fears the traps of the devil, seeks pardon for the sake of Christ, asks also for the aid of the Holy Spirit, recalls the promises and prepares itself as for a great battle, then it will not give way to these allurements but will vigorously repel them and will avoid opportunities for sin. The regenerate have the Holy Spirit and they do not trouble Him by cultivating and kindling depraved desires, but understand that He has been given to guide us and indeed He wants to guide us and help us, if we do not drive Him away but fight against our wicked desires. Therefore, it is said in 2 Cor. 6:1, "We beseech you that you do not receive the grace of God in vain." David was able to keep the Holy Spirit and would have been aided by Him if he had not wanted to expel Him and wanted to give room to the burning lust which had arisen in his mind.

We have given many examples of some of the greatest people who fell because of their security and brought down punishment upon themselves and their posterity, such as Adam, Eve, Aaron, David, Solomon. Of the whole people it was said, "My people sat down to eat and to drink and rose up to play," Ex. 32:6, that is, when their stomachs were full and they felt at ease, they forgot all about God and became negligent and wanton. We are familiar with the common saying: Our minds have an abundance of thoughts about unimportant matters. The devil walks about looking for opportunities to entrap the unwary in lapses from which they cannot escape. He has created a long spear and he sees that many evils follow one fall. What a mountain of sins and calamities resulted from the fall of Adam, David or Solomon! These examples and the daily calamities characteristic of our nature are always before

us to warn us about the frightful wrath of God against sin. Therefore our prayers should be used to drive away carnal security, as Solomon says, "Blessed is the man who always fears the Lord," Prov. 28:14; and "Watch and pray that you do not enter into temptation," Matt. 26:41.

Therefore, although the vestiges of this disease still cling in the regenerate in this life, and our wicked desires have not been diminished and evils still must be condemned, such as the darkness and the many doubts about God, carnal security, errant flames of lust and hate, many great errors of ignorance and sins of omission. These are not only a disorder which is beside the law of God, as the monks imagine, but are truly against the law of God, yet a good conscience and faith still do remain in the regenerate and the Holy Spirit also remains. Our confidence certainly does not rely on our own worthiness, but on Christ, and we establish for ourselves on the basis of the promise that we are really in grace because of Christ, and we do contend against these wicked desires and we seek forgiveness. In the same way also we retain our ability to call upon God, as it says in 1 John 3:21, "If our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God and whatsoever we ask we shall receive, because we keep His commandments," that is, we believe in Christ and keep a good conscience. It is necessary that we know that the conscience is governed by the Word of God.

I have been speaking of venial sin. But when those who have been born again knowingly and willfully break the law of God, as when they take up ungodly opinions or establish them by their own authority or indulge in hatred, ambition, lusts, avarice, or other outward infractions which are counter to the law of God, as David did when he seized the wife of another man and caused the husband to be killed in a subtle manner, such actions are mortal sins which are against conscience, and the person who allows them loses grace, faith, and the Holy Spirit and brings upon himself the wrath of God; and unless he is again turned to God, he will be lost in eternal punishment. Because his conscience then has the intent of sinning, he despises God and flees from Him and cannot call upon Him.

The testimonies on this point are manifest: Eph. 5:5–6, "Know this, that no fornicator or impure person . . . has any inheritance in the kingdom of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for it is because of these things that the wrath of God comes upon those who are disobedient." It is clearly stated that God is wrathful against such people as long as they have the desire to do such things.

Ezek. 33:18–19, "When the righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die; but if the wicked man turns from his wickedness and does what is lawful and right, he shall live."

In the same way we should understand the statements in 1 Cor. 6:9, "Neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers shall inherit the kingdom of God."

Gal. 5:19 ff., "The works of the flesh are manifest . . . adultery, fornication, idolatry. . . . Of these things I say to you that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." He uses the word "manifest" in regard to these works because in regard to them the conscience of the person who does them is surely able to judge from the law of God and understand that the evil he is intending is displeasing to God. Likewise, 1 John 3:7–8, "Let no one deceive you; he who does righteousness is righteous . . . He who commits sin is of the devil." Further, it is totally manifest that the Gospel demands a good conscience.

In 1 Tim. 1:5, it speaks of "love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience and of true faith." In the same chapter, vv. 18–19 it mentions the "good soldier who has faith and a good conscience." In 2 Cor. 1:12 Paul says that his "boasting is the testimony of our conscience"; Gal. 6:4, "Let every man prove his own work, and then he shall boast in himself and not in another," that is, let each person be concerned that he does his own work properly, so that he can have the personal satisfaction of work well done, that is, the testimony and approval of his own conscience which each person needs, and then he will not go chasing after the compliments of others to his shame, nor will he depend on the judgments of others. 1 Peter 3:16, "Having a good conscience . . ."

Likewise it is impossible that a man who clings to his intention of sinning can please God because it is clearly said, "As I live, I do not will the death of the sinner, but that he should turn from his way and live," Ezek. 18:23. The oath should be referred to both conversion and reconciliation. The person who has fallen does not please God as long as he keeps his intention of sinning.

Isaiah teaches the same thing in 66:2, "To whom shall I look except to him who is contrite in spirit and trembles at My word?" In 57:15 He says, "I live with him who has a contrite and humble spirit so that the humble spirit and the contrite heart may live." O what sweet comfort and promise! We must inscribe it in our inner heart, but it pertains to those who feel shame, that is, those who do not cling to the intention of committing sin, but fear the wrath of God.

Finally, it is impossible for these two to exist at the same time, an evil conscience, that is, the intention of committing sin, and faith which is trust in the mercy of God which has been promised for the sake of Christ; because he who harbors the intention to sin despises or flees from God and does not draw near to Him. But trust in His mercy does draw near to God under the intercession of Christ. Wounded consciences find that they are frightfully driven away from prayer and overwhelmed with contempt for God or hopelessness. Thus Paul says, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," Rom. 14:23, that is, the matter has been condemned by God. But many have explained this passage "whatsoever is not of faith" as meaning that whatever is against con-

science "is not of faith," that is, whatsoever is contrary to the law of God, "is sin." But we should recognize that both the Law and the Gospel are included here. A work must be in keeping with the Law of God and at the same time faith must be present, that is, trust in the promised mercy of God for the sake of Christ. In the case of Nicodemus there was no intent to do evil, but yet before his conversion faith was absent, that is, confidence in the mercy of God which had been promised for the sake of Christ, which was the determining factor making his deeds pleasing to God.

From all these points it is clear that we must make a distinction between those who have fallen contrary to conscience and those who have done so out of their weakness and the infirmities which still cling to the saints. This distinction must be maintained in the church. Paul speaks of sin "ruling" or "having dominion" over us, Rom. 6:12.

Furthermore, although it is not an argument about words, yet a comparison of terms will shed some light on the matter. There is a particular emphasis in the expression, "sin rules over us," namely the idea of the savageness and effective power of sin, which absolutely dominates us if we do not resist it. It produces horrible results, it piles up crimes and by various means it brings with it great ruin and merits God's anger and His terrible punishment and drives the guilty into eternal destruction. This was the case of Saul who had been given the Holy Spirit, adorned with marvelous powers and great victories. He, however, did not retain these marks of distinction but fell prey to jealousy. At first it was easy for him to resist this emotion, as Aaron repressed similar lusts, but Saul fed his fury. Therefore the sin which ruled over him first drove him to try to kill David, enticed him away from God, and greatly increased his raging. In his madness Saul rushed from here to there, killing priests and increasing in his anger at God, as the sin dominated him and caused him to become even more savage. Finally God turned him and his army, and even his pious son Jonathan, over to his enemies to be slaughtered. All these concepts are included under the term "sin has dominion or rules over a person."

It is apparent that Paul took this expression from Genesis 4, where a brief statement is made summarizing the doctrine of the Law. First it speaks of the judgment of God, v. 7, "If you do well, you will be received, and if you do evil, sin lies at the door until it is revealed, waiting to attack you, but you must rule over it."

These few verses cover a great area. First, they teach that outward worship pleases God if the heart is right. Then, the sinners are threatened with punishments. There is a warning about delaying lest carnal security is strengthened by the delay of punishment. The passage also refers to the coming judgment at the end of this life. It is a marvelous description. The secular security of the whole world is signified by one verse, "Sin is lying at the door" or is quiet until it is revealed. The sin of Judah lay quietly until he felt the punishment. Then he followed the precept: There are within you depraved desires and "you must rule over them." This means that in men there still remain wicked drives, but we must oppose them. This obedience pleases God when we fight against our sins in recognition of Him. On the contrary, those people have been rejected by God who have allowed sin to rule over them.

According to this statement, Paul says in Rom. 6:14, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Although the attacks are vicious, the doubt great, and the fires of hatred and the desires for the possessions of others very great, yet it must not rule over us, that is, as he interprets his own words, we must not obey sin. But when people are ruled by it, they are torn away from God and later driven into all kinds of crimes and encounter punishment both in this life and hereafter. Therefore when we speak of sin as "mortal," or as Gregory of Nazianzus says "murderous," sin can certainly be described as ruling or having dominion.

There is no need to prolong this discussion with regard to such things as election, for we must judge things according to the Word of God in which He clearly states His will. Nor are we to seek any other will of God outside His Word. He clearly shows us the example of our first parents, that although they were elect, yet when contrary to conscience they fell, they lost grace and drove out the Holy Spirit. For it is certain that Adam and Eve had lost grace and the gifts which they had possessed. Thus their posterity were born as the children of wrath, that is, separated from grace, living in darkness, their will turned away from God, and filled with terrible stubbornness. Indeed, the enormity of the punishment for Adam's fall warns us how great God's wrath is and how many evils follow upon this one fall. We must know how to set before ourselves the many aspects of the doctrine of the church of all ages regarding the very notable instructions the account of the fall of Adam gives us.

Therefore we must not flatter ourselves or excuse our falls, but acknowledge that God is very angry against sin, and we must keep in mind the passages which I have cited which speak of God's anger and judgment against sin and His punishments, as it is said, Col. 3:6, "Because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience." Our minds must blush with shame and reject the intention of sinning and return to God, remembering His oath, "As I live, I do not want the death of the sinner, but that he may turn and live," Ezek. 18:23. We must keep in mind the falls of Adam, Aaron, David, and Manasseh, their punishments and their conversions. We must learn to deplore the terrible weakness of human nature and be vigilant against the allurements and traps of the devil; we must remember that even our individual sins deserve immediate death, just as adulterers and murderers are often put to death in the very act of their

crime; and yet by the immeasurable mercy of God an opportunity has been given to us so that we can return to God, as it is said so sweetly in Is. 30:18,"The Lord will wait that He may be gracious to you," and in Luke 13:6 ff., the parable of the fig tree means the same thing.

We must not misuse this kindness, but if we fall, we must accuse ourselves by our groaning, as David says in 2 Sam. 12:13, "I have sinned against the Lord." We must keep our eyes on the Son of God as our Mediator and return to God with confidence, again calling upon Him and seeking to be forgiven, received, and cleansed. Then we will recognize the gentle voice, "There is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents," Luke 15:7. We will also hear the voice of the Gospel by which we are publicly received into the church, we will be strengthened in this testimony so that we may stand more firmly in the confidence that we have been received even though we have fallen. There must come into our minds the witness of the universal church which always has received the fallen, just as Peter the bishop of Alexandria cited over against the Cathari. Finally, we must give careful attention to the universal teaching concerning repentance which teaches the pious regarding the most important matters and removes from our thinking all thoughts about election.

Finally we must add this point: When we say that mortal sins are lapses which take place against conscience, we are including sins of ignorance and sins of omission, as we commonly say. For we want to assert and confirm that those who are unwilling to learn the Gospel with its statement, "Hear Him," which God has commanded to the whole human race, we must hear Christ; and for this purpose He has spread His Gospel among all nations; and He has added testimonies which do not fail.

Thus all atheists, Turks, Jews, and others who reject the Gospel are guilty of mortal sin, even if they admit that they had not learned the Gospel or understood it. Such was the sect of the Pharisees to whom Christ says, "If you were blind, you would not have sin; but now you say that you see and therefore your sin remains," John 9:41.

There were also the cults of idolators among the gentiles who were living in ignorance because they had voluntarily lost and rejected the doctrine of the Gospel and did not seek it again in the church and had taken up ideas which were in clear conflict with the natural knowledge of God, which shows that there is one God and that He is not to be worshiped as God in any obscene way, as practiced among the Bacchanals and others.

Concerning the matter of omission, Paul says, "Woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel," 1 Cor. 9:16; and Matt. 25:30, "Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness." Let each person consider this sad statement as it applies to his own calling. For although a great deal of ignorance and involuntary omissions remain in the regenerate, as was the case with the apostles before Pentecost, yet there is in a person's calling the will or the zeal to do well and to perform everything correctly. Paul has established this level of concern: First he confesses in 2 Cor. 3:5 that human powers are not strong enough to accomplish the ministry of the Gospel. He says, "We are not sufficient of ourselves to claim anything as coming from our own powers," that is, to explain the teaching or to govern with good counsels or to supply the right words in settling controversies. All who are wise, even if it be in some minor function, still recognize that they are lacking in good judgment. The father of the household often gives poor instruction to his children and deprives them of true hope. In 1 Cor. 4:1 he says, "The prime requisite of a minister is that he be faithful," that is, that such men have the unfailing desire to do good and do not indulge in idleness but study, learn, and work hard and do nothing but the duties of their office; for diligence flees vice, sloth, and putting our noses into other people's business.

Locus 12
The Church

Let us always keep this statement of Paul in mind: "Whom He chose them He also called" [Rom. 8:30]. Whenever we think about the church, we should consider the congregation of the called, which is the visible church, nor should we imagine that somewhere else there are any chosen ones except in this visible assembly itself. For God wants to be invoked and known in no other way than as He has revealed Himself, and He has revealed Himself in no other place than in the visible church in which alone the voice of the Gospel is proclaimed. Nor should we devise some other invisible and silent church of people still living in this life, but the eyes and mind of the assembly of the called, that is, of those who confess the Gospel of God must be looked at, and we should know that the voice of the Gospel must sound forth among people publicly, as it is written, "Their sound has gone out into all the world" [Ps. 19:4]. We should understand that there must be the public ministry of the Gospel and public gatherings, as it says in Eph. 4[:8 ff.], and to this assembly we should join ourselves. We are citizens and members of this visible gathering, as it is enjoined in Ps. 26:8, "I have loved the beauty of Your house"; and Ps. 84[:1], "How amiable are Your tabernacles, O Lord." These and similar passages speak not of a Platonic idea but of the visible church in which the voice of the Gospel rings out and in which the ministry of the Gospel is seen through which God reveals Himself and through which He is efficacious.

Nor should we heap praise upon those vagrants who wander about and attach themselves to no church because they nowhere find such an idea, in which something is not lacking in morals or discipline; but we should look for a church in which the articles of faith are correctly taught and idols are not defended and join ourselves to it and hear and love it as it teaches and add our own invocation and confession to its prayers and confession.Thus Cyrus and other godly men among the gentiles, though they were not at Jerusalem, nevertheless in their public profession they were in the assembly of the called, listened to the voice and ministry of the Gospel, were citizens and visible members of the visible church, joined and added their invocation and confession to that of the prophets and the whole company of the godly who were in Jerusalem which was the principal center of the ministry.

These points should be often and seriously considered in order that we may learn what the church of God is and where it is [and] how God is to be known. And we should genuinely attach ourselves to the church and learn to support it, so that no dissolutions take place. For where there are no congregations, the voice of the Gospel is stilled; for example, the Muslim tryants have destroyed all the church buildings in many places, and no congregations, not even their own, are permitted to come into being. We should realize that such diabolic devastations and destructions are a huge and consummate evil. Hence we should pray God that He would preserve His congregations and we ourselves in all our work should support them.

Now this should be the definition: The visible church is the assembly of those who hold the Gospel of Christ and rightly use the sacraments, in which God, through the ministry of the Gospel, is efficacious, and He regenerates many unto life eternal. In this assembly, however, there are many unregenerate who nevertheless give their assent to the true doctrine, just as in the time of Mary the church consisted of Zacharias, Simeon, Joseph, Elizabeth, Mary, the shepherds, and many others like them who were in agreement regarding the pure doctrine and did not listen to the Sadducees or the other ungodly priests but to Zacharias, Simeon, Anna, Elizabeth, Mary and people like them. For God preserves some as His remnant among the ministers and gradually restores the ministry. And among these hearers of Zacharias and Elizabeth there were some who were not born again, having sins against conscience; and yet, because they consented to the true doctrine, they were citizens and members of the church in this life.

But meanwhile the priests, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees were in conflict with the Word of God; though they were in control, yet they were not members of the church, according to [Gal. 1:8], "If anyone teach another Gospel, let him be accursed," etc. Thus in the time of Elijah the church consisted of Elijah, Elisha, and their hearers, and the church was not without a ministry. For the prophets themselves were the ministers of the Gospel and there were some godly priests with them. For there was a fair-sized multitude of saints, as the text says [1 Kings 19:18], "I still have left to Me seven thousand," etc. Mixed with these were some whose morals were subject to criticism, who still, because they assented to the true doctrine, were members of the church in external association and in the function of the ministry. But in the meantime the priests of Baal and those like them who defended ungodly rites were not members of the church. These examples from history were written to teach the difference between the true and false church.

And now these words are part of the definition: "In which assembly God through the ministry of the Gospel, is efficacious." There are two noteworthy elements, not to be omitted, whenever a definition of the church is formulated. For we must not imagine the church without some knowledge of the promise con-

cerning Christ and without the ministry; the church is not in an assembly where there is neither knowledge of the promise of Christ nor the voice nor the ministry of the Gospel. Therefore Aristides, Cicero, and others like them are not members of the church, even though they have outstanding civil virtues which God gives for the sake of rulers, for so long as He wills that the human race remain in this life. But these statements testify that there must be the knowledge of Christ in the church of God. See John 3[:18, 36]; 17[:17]; 1 Cor. 1[:21]; Rom. 10:14.

Eph. 4:11, Christ sitting at the right hand of God, "also gives some prophets, some apostles, some pastors, [and] some teachers," and He clearly says that the ministry of the Gospel must be preserved, so that "it be not tossed about by various winds of doctrine" [cf. v.14]. Just as the gentiles, when they do not hear the Word of God, fall into frightful ravings and gradually devise other gods and many portents and many prodigious expressions of worship. The same thing happens to heretics, [such as the] Manichaeans, the Anabaptists, etc. because they abandon the Word of God.

Therefore we should know that the church of God is the assembly which is bound to the voice or the ministration of the Gospel. And outside of this assembly, where there is no voice of the Gospel and no invocation of Christ, there are no heirs of eternal life, as it is written, "There is no other name . . . by which we must be saved" [Acts 4:12]. Thus also Isaiah says in 8[:16], "Seal the law among My disciples," that is, I see that great darkness will follow, but I pray You, O God, that You preserve the hearers of [Your] prophets and seal in them Your doctrine given to the prophets, so that the Word and the true understanding of the Word not be quenched. Some churches remain and these are this assembly which retains Your Word uncorrupted which they have received from the prophets.

Therefore Isaiah in 8:20 [cf. Vulgate] adds the words, "To the law and to the testimony. They who do not speak according to this Word shall not have the morning light." For the will of God is not understood except through the Word which He has given, and God wills to be known and invoked as He has revealed Himself.

Then we must also add this, that God is efficacious through this ministry that is, through the voice of the Gospel [as it is] heard, read, and pondered He moves [our] minds by the Holy Spirit, wants us to assent, aids those who assent, and renews eternal life in them. Thus it is written in Rom. 1[:16], "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes"; and 2 Cor. 3[:8], "The new covenant is the ministry of the Spirit." These points contain the saving doctrine and comfort, that is to say, when we know that the promise of eternal life is truly offered in this way through the Word.

Nor should we imagine that there was faith in Socrates, Plato, Xenophon, Cicero, and others like them, because they had a certain knowledge of the law of God. For this is still not knowledge of Christ. But the church is simply and completely bound to the promise of Christ. It is necessary above all things to call upon the name of Christ, and in all those who are capable of being taught there must be knowledge, invocation, and confession of the Son of God. The church has been such since the beginning, from [the time of] Adam, after the promise was given, an assembly sometimes large, sometimes small, which in confidence in the promise of God received the remission of sins and rightly called upon God.

But after this is established, that in the church there must be the voice of the Gospel and the ministry, then questions arise regarding the persons. Is the church bound to the bishops and their colleges, which are said to hold the office of the ministry? Likewise, is [the church] bound to a regular succession of bishops and colleges?

I reply: The church is bound to the very Gospel of God, because, in order that it may be proclaimed in the ministry, God raises up some men from time to time who teach correctly, as it says in Ephesians 4, even if, among these, some have more light, others less. But when the ministers or bishops or colleges or others teach things which are in conflict with the Gospel and the doctrine of the apostles, it is necessary to follow the rule of Paul: "If any one teach another Gospel, let him be accursed" [Gal. 1:8]. From this rule we can judge that the church is not bound to certain titles or a regular succession. For when those who hold the power of orders err, they must not be heeded.

This statement is correct, but unwelcome to political people who see disputes arising thence [and] therefore, with an eye on rulers and human states, transform the church by imitation into a kingdom. Just as the kingdom of France is the mass of people subject to the French king, who in their laws and places of law courts are distinct from other nations, fortified by garrisons, bound to a regular succession of kings and of necessity in the courts obedient to the laws and interpretation of the king, whose interpretation has validity because of [his] authority, so also many imagine that the church is the mass of people subject to the one Roman pope, distinct from other nations by ceremonies which the popes have established, and bound to a regular succession of bishops and to the interpretation of Scripture which the pope or councils have handed down. For since dissensions often arise regarding what has been written, they say that there must be another sure rule, that is the voice of a ruler, just as in a secular kingdom the voice of the king has the authority to interpret the laws. These things are plausibly said among rulers. For human reason loves this kind of picture of the church—a picture that is in agreement with secular opinions, and rulers understand that their authority is

increased by this view, and they believe that this form is quite useful for peace.

The godly also know that in this imitation, or rather, unhappy imitation, there are many errors. We must agree that the church is a visible assembly, but it is not the kingdom of the popes but an assembly like a company of scholars. For God wills that the church not be absolutely hidden in secret places or that it be unknown, but He wills that it be listened to; He wills that His Son our Lord Jesus Christ be acknowledged; He wills that He be invoked always by some part of the human race; He wills to gather out of the human race an inheritance for His Son. Therefore it is written, "Their sound has gone out into all the earth" [Ps. 19:4]. And Christ Himself says in Ps. 2[:7], "I will talk about the precept." Therefore the voice of the Gospel and of the ministry of the Word will remain, and there will be some visible assembly of the church of God, but it will be like a school assembly. There is order, there is a distinction between those who teach and those who hear, and there are grades: Some are apostles, others are pastors, others teachers, and it is correct to understand the words, "Tell it to the church" [Matt. 18:17]; of a visible gathering. But first we must see who the members of this visible church are. For those who condemn the clear truth of the Gospel and exercise violence to establish manifest errors are not members of this gathering, of which it is written: "Tell it to the church." Nor, finally, should we accept this, that most of their decisions must be given preference. Because, although there are many who believe correctly and have kept the light of the Gospel, yet there are many more who openly contradict the Gospel either out of weakness or doubt, like the apostles themselves for a long time held on to the dream of a worldly empire. Therefore who will be the judge when a dissension arises about a statement of Scripture, since then there is need for the voice of one who settles controversy?

I reply: The Word of God itself is the judge and to it is added the confession of the true church. For some godly always follow the Word as the seat of authority, and with the confession of those who are stronger the weak are aided, as Christ says, "And you, when you are converted, strengthen your brothers" [Luke 22:32]. In this way controversies over doctrine are settled. And although the majority do not heed this true judge and the true confession, as also ancient examples show often happens, God, the judge of the church, finally settles controversy, destroying blasphemers, as when the greater part of the Jews opposed Jeremiah and later the apostles, blasphemers were finally destroyed.

There is, therefore, some difference between the judgment seats of the church and secular judgment seats. For in the civil realm either the monarch alone makes pronouncements by his own authority or the opinion of the majority prevails in the senate. But in the church the position which is in agreement with the Word of God and the confession of the faithful prevails, whether they are more numerous or less numerous than the ungodly.Thus the ancients condemned Paul of Samosata and later Arius. The judge was the Word of God, that is, testimonies brought from the Gospel in good faith and without sophistry which convinced all but a prejudiced judge; but still also the weak were then greatly aided in expressing themselves by the confession of the stronger, namely of those who had heard the apostles or their disciples, that is those of whom it was clear that they had been faithful guardians of doctrine, such as, Polycarp, Irenaeus, [and] Gregory [Thaumaturgus] of Neocaesarea. Their disciples [in turn] had heard from them that *Logos* indicates a person. Later they themselves, after comparing statements of the Gospel, acknowledged that this was the natural meaning [of the statement] which they had heard from [their teachers]. Some also not only learn from those who went before them but also are strengthened as by those who are stronger. Thus Peter of Alexandria refuted Meletius [and] cited the Gospel, which very clearly teaches that fallen ones who amend their lives should be received; but at the same time he was helped by the examples of the earlier church which had always received those who had previously fallen.

Thus we declare regarding the baptism of infants: We have clear testimonies in Scripture which affirm that outside the church there is no salvation. Therefore we bring infants into the church. Further, we are also aided by the testimonies of the early church. Thus the Word of God is the judge and to it is added the pure confession of antiquity. For God wills that in the church there be the ministry of the [spoken] word. Hence we must heed the church as teacher, but faith and prayer rely on the Word of God, not on human authority. We must learn from the church that *Logos* in the account in John 1 indicates a person, but we believe that the Son of God is by nature God, and we call upon Him because He Himself revealed this and taught it in the Gospel.

We must ponder this distinction, lest we despise the church when it teaches, and yet we must know that the judge is the Word of God itself. Thus we must beware of pitfalls in both directions: on the one hand, lest a tyranny of corrupt practice be established and yet on the other lest we give free rein to audacious minds which, if they will not heed the true church, devise notions which do not have the testimony of any era in the church, as in our time Servetus, Campanus,[1] the Anabaptists, and many others have done. Let us learn to love, respect, and honor the church when it teaches and seek the testimonies of the church in its periods of greater purity, as is indicated in a very lovely way in the allegory of Samson [Judg. 14:18], "If you had not

[1] Servetus and Campanus were both prominent anti-Trinitarians of the era. Campanus was also an Anabaptist. Servetus was put to death by Calvin for his views, and Campanus was imprisoned.

plowed with my heifer, you would not have discovered [my riddle]," that is, unless you had heard the church, which is the guardian of the Word of God, working in the ministry, the Word of God would be entirely unknown to you. And Ps. 68:26, "Bless God the Lord in the congregations [churches] from the fountains of Israel," that is, from the ministry of the prophets and apostles.

I have spoken of the definition of the church and of the question as to where the church is to be sought, namely wherever the voice of the Gospel is proclaimed uncorrupted, especially where it pertains to the foundation, as Paul says, that is, where the articles of faith are taught in their wholeness and without corruption and where manifest cults of idols are not defended. Now, since there is a great weakness even in the saints in this life, some have more [and] some less light. Hence Basil, Ambrose, Epiphanius, Augustine, Bernard, and many others, even if they correctly held to the foundation, yet from time to time they said something ill-advisedly in regard to human rites, so that by the practice of their era some of the contagion spread to all people. Therefore Paul commands that we consider particularly the foundation, and he indicates that many true members of the church have some weakness and some failings.

[In 1 Cor. 3:11] he says, "No other [foundation] can be laid than that which has been laid, which is Jesus Christ." In this statement he includes the uncorrupted knowledge of all the articles of faith and the prohibition of the worship of idols. Then there follows [v. 12] that one man builds on [the foundation] gold, another straw. Thus Polycarp built gold on the foundation, that is, he explained the necessary doctrine in his refutation of Marcion concerning the essence of God, the cause of evil, and many other articles, and he performed the acts of worship which had been commanded by God and, above all, he governed the church well and adorned [his] confession with marvelous steadfastness under torture. All of these things are included in the word "gold." But Basil and many others built straw on the foundations. To be sure, they did retain the articles of faith, but they still established monastic rites and preferred these practices to civil life and spread the notion in the minds of people, so that they thought that [such things] are the worship of God. And then many erred much more when they imagined that such ceremonies merit the remission of sins.

Furthermore, Paul says [in 1 Cor. 3:13], "Fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is." For he is alluding to building material. Gold is not consumed by fire, but straw easily succumbs to flames and quickly burns up. Thus doctrine, discussed and disputed in [a time of] testing, remains true and necessary and comforts minds, as now all the godly joyously embrace the tested doctrine of the righteousness of faith and perceive it to be a great comfort. But on the other hand, the monastic rites disappear because they are now perceived as not being profitable either for knowledge of God or for morals. I have mentioned these things so that Paul's statement may be carefully considered and so that human weakness which still is often observed in the true members of the church, may be lamented and that we may wisely judge the statements of writers and recognize what things are to be condoned and what things are not to be condoned.

In order that the difference between the church and [civil] states may be seen more clearly, let [this] comparison be made: In the empires of the world these three things are necessary: order, glory, and protection. Thus in the kingdom of France there is order, so that there is one king at whose death it is necessary to be subject to the one who succeeds in regular succession. Then there are certain laws and courts of certain places and ranks of the princes and the common people. The glory consists in the excellence of counsel and powers and in victories, because, since peace is never certain, as Plato says, in empires peace is an empty word. For either restless citizens or enemies always cause tumult. It is necessary that there be many glorious successes and victories for those who govern; otherwise rulers are quickly overthrown. Defences are armies and the means necessary for domestic rule and for waging war.

These three things are different in the church than in empires.

1. There is order, because there is indeed one head, who gives life and eternal blessings to the church, namely the Son of God. But this Head is not now seen with physical eyes nor does He hold an assembly limited to some single place; and though there is no [ranking] order, there is always the ministry of the Gospel. And by divine law obedience is owed to ministers of the Gospel in all matters which the Gospel prescribes. However, this order is not bound to a regular line of succession, but when the bishops and ministers defend errors and idols, they are to be avoided. Further, there are degrees of gifts, as when Paul excels Barnabas. These degrees must be considered, so that we may love and honor individuals adorned with their gifts.

2. The church does not always have secular glory, that is, material victories such as it had when Saul at the time of David overcame hostile armies, but for the most part the church has been, is, and will be subject to the cross; and yet it has marvelous glory of wisdom and virtues and of many miracles which are not seen by the ungodly. Its highest honor is that it knows and prays to the true God. For there are always some true members of the church who keep the foundation, even if there is also a great number of weak people who, because they rightly invoke God, still have great honor. As for the rest, it was said above that they are not members of the church who stubbornly defend errors which conflict with the foundation, even if they use the name and title of the church as a pretext.

Then there are the great victories of all who rightly pray, because they are not destroyed by the traps of

the devil, the terrors of tyrants, and other trials; and there are many daily miracles of frequent deliverance in great perils, many of which [deliverances] take place because of the prayers of the church; for example, Paul knows that he and his ship are saved by God, even if others thought that it was saved by chance.

A great glory is happiness in vocation, studies, counsels and judgments, just as on the other hand parricide of church or fatherland is the height of depravity and calamity and the turpitude to be avoided most of all.

3. Finally, there are no visible defenses of the church bound to certain places, that is, after the destruction of the [political] state of Israel the church in this life has neither kings nor armies nor any one certain or perpetual seat. Thus Christ says, "The Son of man has no place to lay His head" [Matt. 8:20]. For it is the will of God that the church be under the cross, that its cases be evaluated in a different court, which are not the writings of the philosophers, but only revealed in the Gospel.

Now, although God does from time to time raise up certain kings for a time for the defense of the church, as He raised up Cyrus, Constantine, and others, yet He did not always join kingdoms to the church to defend it, but wanted it to pray, and hope for the whole body's defense from heaven, as it says in Is. 46[:3–4], "I bear you in My womb . . . . I shall also carry the aging church." Hos. 1[:7], "I will save you not by bow nor by sword but by the Lord your God." What is sadder than this sight? The church is at loose ends and [its] scholars are in exile. And although God provides fair reception here and there, yet the power of the enemies of the Gospel is greater, and it is uncertain how strong the defenders are and how long they will last. Cyrus fostered the church, Cambyses and Darius oppressed [it]. We should ponder this form of the church in order to understand the dangers and at the same time to learn that the church is gathered, preserved, restored, [and] defended not by human counsels or defenses, but by the power of God, just as in Paradise Adam and Eve again were delivered from sin and the tryanny of the devil. Therefore there is always present the Son of God as the guardian of His church, as He said, "I am with you even to the end of the world" [Matt. 28:20].

Against the Donatists

We have described the visible church, in which we have said that there are many unregenerate mixed with the saints, but at this point it is necessary that the evil people be discerned. Some believe correctly in regard to doctrine and they are not enemies of the Gospel or heretics, but they only have some weaknesses in morals. If such people have not been excommunicated, even though they are called dead members, they still are in the outward fellowship of the church, and when they carry out the duties of teaching or administering the sacraments, the ministries are valid and efficacious and one is permitted to use them.

Therefore we must vigorously attack the error of the Donatists, who contend that neither the Gospel nor any sacrament is efficacious if the morals of the minister are corrupt. In opposition to this error one must cling to clear views.

In Matt. 13[:47–48] Christ compares the church to a net in which are both good and bad fish. Likewise He says that the tares will remain in the church even to resurrection [Matt. 13:40]. Again, "As in the days of Noah" etc. [Matt. 24:37]. From these statements it is clear that in the church there always was, is, and will be even to the resurrection a great number of evil people.

Therefore, since there are wicked people in the church and since hypocrisy cannot be recognized by human judgment, there can even be hypocrites in the ministry. Accordingly, faith would be made unsure if the power of the Gospel and the sacraments were to depend on the worthiness of the minister. Therefore we must understand that the Gospel and the sacraments are efficacious because of the promise of God [and] not because of the person of the minister. Christ therefore calls our minds and our faith away from the person of the minister to Himself when He says, "He that hears you hears Me" [Luke 10:16], as if He were saying that the Gospel is not yours and it is not your work to save the hearers, but it is God's work, who in this marvelous way, when the voice of the Gospel is spread, gathers to Himself the eternal church. As John also says, "I baptize you with water, but another will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Spirit" [Matt. 3:11], that is, the Gospel and the sacraments are efficacious because of Christ and through Christ. There is also cited this statement of Christ, "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat" etc. [Matt. 23:2]. These words mean that even if there are hypocrites in the ministry, yet the function itself is valid, if only they sit in the seat of Moses, that is, they should teach the doctrine which has been given by God, they should not sit in another seat, and they should not set forth a doctrine which is in conflict with faith.

This whole case against the Donatists has been fully treated by Augustine in many books, and in [his] Epist. 166 [(105), MPL 33.400–401] he repeats this argument: If the power of the Gospel and the sacraments should depend on the worthiness of the minister, our faith would be made unsure. Therefore, in order that faith might be certain, it is necessary to reject and condemn the fanatic ravings of the Donatists.

This error was also refuted by Gregory of Nazianzus who used this simile: The shape of the little image is the same, whether it be engraved on a gold or an iron ring. Likewise the ministry is the same, he says, whether good or evil men hold [the office]. It is necessary to point out these things regarding the Donatists, so that [the godly] may be fortified against such

ravings and may learn to understand the power of the ministry. For also in our age the Anabaptists revive the errors of the Donatists and impiously reject ministries while professing that they have established a church in which there are no evil people, just like the Circumcellions, while actually they have brought together a large rabble of the worst thieves, as the example of Münster shows, which is a good reminder that good minds should exercise great care and diligence that they not approve false notions, and that they should consider that from one error manifold and incurable ravings gradually arise. Therefore what is to be done? Should open sins of ministers of the Gospel be covered up? I reply: Those who are polluted with open sins should be excommunicated by the common voice of the church, as Paul in 1 Corinthians 5 put the incestuous man out of the church. And Christ in Matt. 18[:17] says, "Tell it to the church." And that strictness must not be relaxed, but if it is relaxed, yet the ministry is valid, as has been said.

Furthermore, the magistrates who bear the sword must use the laws to punish those crimes such as adultery, murder, and the like.

But in addition to public crimes there are weaknesses in the manners of all people; one is more wayward or more given to anger, another is more indulging or less temperate than he should be, another is more intent upon wealth, one is criticized for his pride, another for being dilatory. Finally all have some weaknesses of their own. In regard to these common behavior patterns, when [open] wrongdoing is not involved we should understand that the general rule for the godly person to follow is: Know [but] do not hate the manners of a friend. Again, "Forgive, and it shall be forgiven you" [Luke 6:37]. Again, "Love covers all sins" [Prov. 10:12]. And particularly must one be patient with the less-than-perfect manners of godly rulers and teachers, as Christ commands us to wash one another's feet [John 13:14], that is, to improve such weaknesses among us with mutual gentleness.

Now, it is common slanderously to exaggerate the faults of rulers; therefore the Holy Spirit so often commands us to honor them, as it is said so earnestly in the Epistle to the Hebrews [13:17] as if [the author] were saying that the task of governing in itself is difficult and troublesome, but when there is added to it the stubbornness of inferiors, the trouble doubles. For as Herodotus says, as much as war differs from peace, so much does sedition differs from war; thus it is harder for a ruler to fight both with his own [subjects] and with others, and in an otherwise difficult office he is hindered by the very ones by whom he should be helped. Therefore also Paul says in 1 Thess. 5[:12–13], "We pray that you believe that those who rule excellently should be loved because of the ministry and that you should be at peace with them." Finally, there are many precepts which deal with this matter. Even as Ham was punished [Genesis 9] for ridiculing [his] father, so [people] should understand that they will all pay the penalties to God if they are troublesome to ministers who teach them correctly if there be some weakness in manners, as it was said to Abraham, "I will bless them that bless you and curse them that curse you" [Gen. 12:3]. This pattern undoubtedly pertains to the church and those who teach correctly. Therefore we should understand that a person should not leave the church over the morals of the teachers nor should a schism be created if there is no error in doctrine.

But there are other evil people, polluted with false ideas, who defend godless doctrine and oppose the truth and kill pious men because of [their] profession of the true doctrine. Thus at the time of Jeremiah, [Judas] Maccabaeus, [and] Christ there were priests [and] their followers who openly contradicted the true doctrine and killed the saints. With such a group, even if it holds its power through tyranny, the saints should have no fellowship, and they have the right to be guilty of schism, because God's command is, "Flee idolatry" [1 John 5:21]. Likewise, "If anyone will teach another Gospel, let him be anathema" [Gal. 1:8]. For this reason the apostles withdrew from Caiaphas and his company.

We must make a careful distinction here. The ministry is not changed, even if the morals of some are wicked, but when false doctrine is defended and idolatry supported, then the ministry itself is changed. Hence one must leave the ministry of those who corrupt the doctrine. And although the principal part of the ministry is teaching, yet sometimes also those who corrupt the doctrine possess a part of the ministry, such as the administration of one of the sacraments. Thus the Israelites retained circumcision, even though they later added ungodly practices. Caiaphas and the Pharisees retained circumcision, [and] although in other matters they embraced serious errors, still circumcision was valid, not because of these persons but because it was performed by the church.

We should say the same about the Baptism of those who were baptized in churches where false teachers were in control. For Baptism was valid because it was performed by the true church and the words of institution and their meanings were retained without idolatry in this sacrament. But the baptism of Paul of Samosata, the Manichaeans, and the Arians was not valid, because they did not retain the meaning of the words "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" [Matt. 28:19]. I have touched briefly on these things so that the faithful might be strengthened against the Anabaptists and to ponder that evil men often rule in the church. As Christ says, the church is like a net with good and bad fish in it. Therefore a ministry is valid which they retain in these sacraments, which they do not openly corrupt.

Now although the Baptism of those who retain the meaning of the words is valid, as I have said, yet because they teach wicked things about other matters,

they give reason why the church should necessarily separate from them.

There is also a difference between persons who have sinned out of ignorance and those who are open blasphemers, such as Caiaphas and those like him were after the resurrection of Christ. Nor is there any doubt that one must depart from blasphemers and those who defend manifest idols, as it is written, "Flee idolatry" [1 John 5:21].

The Signs Which Point Out the Church, Which Others Call Marks

The marks which point out the church are the pure Gospel and the proper use of the sacraments. And although the church does not always flourish with the same glory, yet from time to time certain Indicators of the Holy Spirit are added in [His] marvelous governance. Now, I have mentioned testimonies above that the Gospel is the sign which shows what gathering the church is, and these are sufficiently clear. See Eph. 2[:20–22] and Is. 59[:21].

Others, in unhappy imitation of human states, add to the church these signs: the regular succession of bishops and obedience in human traditions; and besides they arrogantly arm the bishops with two royal prerogatives, the power to interpret Scripture and the power to make laws and establish new forms of worship. But the pious are to be warned that they beware of these traps. For in all ages in the governing of the church, worldly people, ignorant of the doctrine of the Gospel, have pictured for themselves a church by such imitation of states, and in this way great errors are established.

Therefore, when you hear all these things: "the regular succession," "the power to interpret," and "the power to make laws," you should know that traps have been laid for the true teaching and a pretext is being sought to establish errors in the church. Therefore we must remove this notion of human states and change our views regarding the church. I have said above that the church is not bound to the regular succession of bishops, as they call it, but to the Gospel. When bishops do not teach correctly, regular succession has no relevance for the church, but one must of necessity separate from them.

But as to the power to interpret Scripture, we must understand that there is a great difference between a power and a gift. In the church there is the gift of interpretation, not bound to a certain order [of clergy], just as the Holy Spirit is not given because of position or title. This gift is not a power attached to an order or a title, to which we must be obedient on account of the order in the same way that we must be obedient because of order to a royal or imperial interpretation. For God has given to civil magistrates the power to establish laws which are in agreement with reason and to interpret them. But it is an entirely different matter in regard to the voice of the Gospel in the church. The Son of God has revealed this from the bosom of the eternal Father. And it is the correct understanding, placed above reason, concerning the knowledge of God, the wrath of God against sin, the enormity of sin, the righteousness given through the Son of God, concerning fear, faith, the cross, God's help, the resurrection, the church, eternal life, the two natures in Christ, and concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, since God had commanded that we hear His Son and then the apostles were sent by the command of the Son so that we might hear them, we must keep the doctrine taught through the apostles and learn their doctrine [and] not devise interpretations which are in conflict with their sure and certain testimonies, as the Jews devised corrupt interpretations in order to escape the statements concerning Christ.

Further, those who want to be learners of the Gospel do not hear in order slanderously to distort, but in order to know God, honor Him, and be obedient to Him. When they assent to the Word of God with fear and faith, a light is kindled in them by which they are helped to distinguish the Gospel from human wisdom and knowledgeably to receive the articles of doctrine concerning God, sin, righteousness, Christ, the church, and eternal life.

Third, they are also aided by the testimony of the true church, as when Paul of Samosata was unwilling to interpret the passage, "In the beginning was the Word," etc. [John 1:1–14], as referring to a person, the faithful were aided by the witness of Irenaeus, who had heard Polycarp, a disciple of John. And they were also helped by Gregory of Neocaesarea and the testimonies of the church of Alexandria. These affirmed that this meaning was kept by the apostles, and the godly saw that the other testimonies in John and Paul were in agreement with it.

And although the church must be heard in keeping with the statement [Judg. 14:18], "If you had not ploughed with my heifer, you would not have found out . . . ," yet faith does not rely on the authority of the church but on the very voice of the Gospel. We call upon the Son of God because it is said, "And the Word was God" [John 1:1]; again, "My Father works until now, and I work" [John 5:17]; and, "Without Me you can do nothing" [John 15:5]; and Stephen says [Acts 7:59], "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

Also, when testimonies of the church are sought, one must consider where and what the church is, which ages of the church are purer, [and] which writers are more genuine. Thus we are aided against the Anabaptists. We know first from the Gospel that infants are born with guilt and subject to the sin of origin, and that this is remitted to those who are in the church, and that infants should become members of the church and be brought to Christ. Finally, add the testimony of the early church which, we know from our reading, baptized in-

fants. Therefore we hold that one is in no way to yield to the raving of the Anabaptists, who try to expel so many thousands of infants from the church and destroy them—one error, with which they mix many [more].

Therefore the gift of interpretation is a light which the Holy Spirit kindles in the minds of those who assent to the Gospel, as Christ says in John 14[:26], "The Holy Spirit will teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance which I have said to you." Here He binds the apostles and the whole church to what He has said, and He adds that the Holy Spirit will remind us of the gift [and] of this very word itself. And in John 6[:45] Christ quotes from Is. [54:13], "They will all be taught by God." On the other hand it is said of the ungodly that all the ungodly do not understand; cf. 1 Cor. 2:14; Is. 6:9.

These testimonies clearly show that interpretation is a gift of the godly and it is not bound to power or the majority, which is often ungodly, and indeed the chief penalty is the blindness of ungodliness, cf. Ps. 69[:23] and Rom. 11[:10]. The obvious ravings of the gentiles and of the Jews show that ungodliness is especially punished with blindness.

If the power of [clerical] orders or the majority would have the authority to interpret, the sentiments of the Pharisees should have had preference over the sentiments of Zacharias, Simeon, Elizabeth, Mary, Anna, and people like them. But the true church is often a small group dominated by a large multitude of godless people, as Isaiah says [in 1:9], "Unless the Lord had left us a seed, we would be as Sodom." Therefore we must absolutely not tie interpretation to the authority of a [clerical] order and to the majority. And we must beware of these traps when the adversaries try to establish errors under this pretext.

Furthermore, we must also recognize the gift itself and thank God that He has always so governed His church that, when the doctrine became obscured, He again restored it, as after Noah, Abraham was the interpreter of the promise, so after Moses, Samuel, David, and others in turn were sent. While the Pharisees and Sadducees were ruling the church, there still were people like Simeon, Zacharias, Anna, Mary, and many others in whom the gift of interpretation shone forth, in some more and in others less clearly. Likewise later God kindled the flame of true doctrine in the church from time to time. We, therefore, must not extinguish this kindled [flame] under the fear of the multitude or of the power of [clerical] order which defends idols and errors.

As for the rest, also those who at one time believed correctly can fall and those who believe correctly still have in them some darkness and their stubble, as [Paul] says [1 Cor. 3:12]. Therefore we must hold the views taught on the basis of the Word of God and carefully compared. We shall speak later about the similarity of traditions and about the laws of bishops. For the unity of the church must not be based on the similarity of human traditions, because we must cling to this position, that human traditions are not worship; likewise that people who otherwise believe correctly are not to be condemned because of them.

Locus 13
The Sacraments

At the outset let us establish a simple definition of the word. In current church terminology, "sacrament" of course means a ceremony established in the Gospel to be a testimony to the promise which belongs to the Gospel, that is, the promise of reconciliation or grace.

Profane people think that the sacraments are signs of profession which distinguish us from other people, [we] who have as it were joined this covenant, just as the toga distinguished the Romans from people of other nations; or [they think the sacraments] are symbols of certain functions regarding other people. For as at one time in making treaties it was the practice to eat meat of sacrifices together, so many now think in keeping with this human custom that the Lord's Supper is only such a mark of a mutual covenant among people. But although many purposes have been ordained for the sacraments, yet far at the head of all of these must be placed this chief purpose, namely that they might be signs of God's will toward us, that is, added testimonies of the promise of grace. And we must also consider the whole church, in which immediately after the fall of Adam, when the promise of grace had been given, ceremonies were added, namely the sacrifices of Adam which were kindled from heaven; a lamb was offered which was consumed by fire from heaven. This signified the passion of the coming Sacrifice, promise of which had been given [Gen. 3:15] and which was a testimony of reconciliation.

Then when the promise was renewed, a new testimony was added, namely circumcision. Finally, with the light of doctrine again restored, there was added the slaying of a lamb and other ceremonies. Thus in the church there were added to the proclamation of the Gospel the rites of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. I shall speak about others later. These rites are not human spectacles, like the tragedies of the Greeks, which were set up so that some kind of commemoration of things done might be handed down to posterity; but they have far higher purposes.

For first, they are signs of God's will toward us, or testimonies of promised grace. Hence Paul says of Abraham that he received circumcision as a sign of the righteousness of faith [Rom. 4:11], that is, testimony by which God testified that he had been received into grace. And because the sacraments are added to the promises, therefore just as the promise must be received by faith, so it is necessary in the use of the sacraments that there be added the faith which looks to the promise.

Many purposes can be added thereafter: confession, distinction from other [religious] groups, celebration of a public gathering, [and] a reminder of a certain work. Thus the Lord's Supper is first a testimony of the grace of God toward us. It reminds us of the whole Gospel, [and] of the death and resurrection of Christ [and] bears witness that the benefits of Christ are given to us. And hence faith which believes the promise of grace must be added.

Then other purposes are added. Theodosius, in the Gospel, by this example publicly confessed what he believed. Likewise through this rite one is perceived as being separate from other [religious] groups

Third, because God wills that the church not lie in hiding completely unknown but wills that it be seen and heard, so that His name might be celebrated and [His] doctrine spread, therefore He also wills that there be proper assemblies. He wills that the Gospel be heard in the public meeting. Therefore, that confession might be made in such a meeting and there might be exercises of faith, He has always willed that there be certain public rites for which the church would publicly gather. And although the devil tries in various ways to scatter and spoil these meetings, yet God repeatedly cleanses and marvelously preserves them. Thus also the Lord's Supper was instituted for this use, that it might be a basic element in the public gathering.

Finally, the rite is also a reminder of many obligations. First, of giving thanks to God, then of mutual kindness of members of the church, just as those who made covenants partook together of things which had been sacrificed.

The Number of Sacraments

It is not the most ancient practice to list seven sacraments. There are disputes regarding this number; let this be their goal: that necessary things be retained and that they be distinguished from those which are not necessary. Ceremonies divinely instituted in the preaching of Christ must also be distinguished from other works which do not pertain properly to the new covenant.

If the general rule is that they want every work commanded by God to which some promise has been added, to be called a sacrament, then prayer, patience under the cross, almsgiving, [and] forgiving of injury are sacraments. For to these works divine promises have always been added. There are well-known commands and promises regarding prayer: Ps. 50:15; Deut. 4:7; Matt. 7:7. It might be useful to include prayer among the sacraments, so that this very name might remind people about the promises and the benefits of this very great work.

There are promises regarding patience under the cross: Ps. 51:17; 116:15; 72:14. And in the Gospel

there are many statements of this kind: Matt. 16:24; 10:30.

There are some very well known statements regarding almsgiving: Luke 6:38; Is. 58:7.

Regarding the forgiving of injury [it says]: "Forgive and it shall be forgiven you," Luke 6:37. This is the glorious promise added to our forgiveness, not because our forgiving can placate the wrath of God, but to remind us of the Gospel, just as the other sacraments [do].

Therefore, if the name "sacrament" is to be applied not only to ceremonies but also to moral works, then marriage can also be called a sacrament, because it is both instituted by the command of God and adorned with a promise, such as Ps. 128:6. And it has been instituted for the spreading and conserving of the church. Moreover it is also an image both of the love of Christ toward [His] bride the church and of the afflictions and works of the church. Just as a husband who truly loves his wife and children fights for them and bestows his goods on them, so Christ truly loves the church [and] adorns it with His blessings, His righteousness, and the fellowship of eternal life. Paul indicates that this love and affection of an honorable husband is attached to nature for this reason, that it might be a picture representing the true love of Christ toward [His] bride, the church. Further, afflictions and domestic duties are a picture of the afflictions and duties of the church.

But when we thus use the term "sacrament" in a general way, we are speaking not only of ceremonies which were first instituted in the preaching of Christ but in one way or another of those works which we will always remember have been set forth in the Decalogue as the sum of all the moral works which are necessary and have been commanded by God. Moreover let us seek everywhere for added promises and threats and examples of them.

We should also know that there is a difference between the promises connected with the Law and the promise which belongs to the Gospel, which is the promise of free reconciliation.

But when the word "sacrament" is understood of ceremonies instituted in the preaching of Christ, we list these sacraments: Baptism, the Lord's Supper, [and] absolution, which are external rites and are signs of the entire Gospel, and properly speaking are in fact testimonies of the remission of sins or of reconciliation, which is especially mentioned in the common definition: A sacrament is a sign of grace, that is, of free reconciliation, which is given for the sake of Christ and proclaimed in the Gospel.

In my opinion there is considerable merit in adding also ordination, that is, the call into the ministry of the Gospel and the public approval of this call, because all these things are enjoined as injunctions of the Gospel, e.g., Titus [1:5], "Appoint elders, as I have commanded," and there is added the promise which is the greatest of all and most worthy of recognition, which testifies that God is truly efficacious through the ministry of those who have been chosen by the voice of the church, as the universal statement testifies of the apostles and all who proclaim the Word which has been given through the apostles: "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes" [Rom. 1:16].

And Christ says in John 17[:20], "I do not pray for these only, but for all who will believe through their word." Note also John 20:23; Eph. 4:8 ff.; Luke 10:16; John 15:1 ff.; 2 Cor. 5:19–20, 3:6. These and many other passages like them clearly testify that God is efficacious through this very ministry of those who teach the Gospel, which He wills to preserve in the church by the constant calling [of ministers]. For Paul is expressly speaking about the external Word or of the ministry that proclaims the Word of the Gospel when he says, "The Word is near you, in your mouth" [Rom. 10:8], and again, "He has committed to us the Word of reconciliation; therefore we are ambassadors for Christ," 2 Cor. 5:19–20. And the command has been given to the church that such ministers or ambassadors be chosen, as is expressly written to Titus.

Therefore the rite of ordination reminds us of this command and these promises, and we should give thanks to God for instituting and preserving this ministry and for receiving us in this way and freeing us from sin, the power of the devil, and eternal death and for restoring to us righteousness and eternal life. In this faith we should honor and uphold the minstry and use it, learn and hear the Gospel, exercise faith by the use of the sacraments, and understand that through this ministry eternal blessings are given to us. Likewise we should pray God that He would give able ministers and support them, as Christ enjoins us to pray that God may send out laborers into His harvest. And in Col. 4[:3] Paul enjoins others to pray that God may aid him in his work.

There is also this great comfort, that since the ministry was instituted by God, even if in the world it is always variously tossed about and many people withdraw from it and perish, yet it cannot be completely overturned. For Christ says in Matt. 16:18, "On this rock I will build My church," that is, on this ministry, and "the gates of hell will not prevail against it." With this consolation the godly also in our own times sustain themselves and know that there will be remnants of the church and of the true ministry remaining even if empires fall. Yet this does not mean that the church will be without troubles, but such things are and always have been the punishments of the world, as Amos says [9:8–9]. Here the prophet sets forth threats and comfort at the same time. And it is no wonder that empires are punished, because, whereas they should have supported and upheld the ministry, as the psalmist says, "Open your gates, O you princes" [Ps. 24:7 (Vulgate)] the ungodly rulers try to destroy the churches. Others,

indifferent, by their neglect deform [and] do not support studies, do not seek learned ministers, do not provide a fair living for them, and show no interest in being reconciled with them. Finally, they either neglect this part of the public estate, as of the lowest priority, or severely restrict it.

Basil laments that in his time the most unworthy, unlearned, and laziest of all the ministers were elevated to the governance of the church. Later, as wealth increased, ecclesiastical offices were prey for the powerful. But the ministry itself was neglected and was corrupted by unlearned mercenaries partly out of superstition, partly out of greed.

Now again also in those places where the true doctrine has been received, many unlearned and unworthy men are admitted to the ministry, because the leaders neglect the whole matter, do not support studies, and are not concerned that ministers have a living. Thus the church is afflicted with constant difficulties in this world, about which godly men must be concerned so that each in his own place may relieve them as much as he can and that God also would mitigate [His] punishments.

And indeed, God most strongly requires these duties which are beneficial for the preservation of the ministry, and He provides great rewards [Matt. 10:42]. There are notable examples: the widow of Zarephath, who took care of Elijah; Obadiah in 1 Kings 18, who defended and fed the 100 prophets who were hidden in caves; Hezekiah, who in 2 Chronicles 31 arranged for support of the priests and Levites; the Ethiopian who saved Jeremiah [Jer. 38:7–13].

The teaching on ordination, when it is listed among the sacraments, should remind us of all these things, of the efficacy of the ministry, of prayer for the ministry, of the functions that belong to the ministry, [and] of the punishments for spurning the ministry; and the rite itself, when we publicly witness the very ancient practice, undoubtedly approved by the earliest fathers, namely the laying on of hands, which was always a sign of something set aside for the worship of God, has also been a sign of His blessing. By this rite Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph [Gen. 48:14]. By this rite Moses appointed Joshua to govern the people of God, Num. 27[:18]. By this rite Christ blessed the children [Mark 10:13–16]. By this rite animals were set aside for sacrifice [Lev. 16:21], and sacrifices in a special way pointed to Christ. God the eternal Father laid [His] hands on Him, that is, He chose Him, blessed Him, anointed Him, and subjected [Him] to Himself; He loaded a great burden on Him and made Him a sacrifice for us. This rite of laying on of hands pointed especially to this.

But later the meaning [of the act] was applied to ministers. Christ the High Priest laid [His] hands on them, that is, He chose them by the voice of the church, blessed them, and anointed them with His gifts, as it is written, "He ascended on high [and] gives gifts to mankind," prophets, apostles, pastors, teachers, whom He adorns with the light of doctrine and other gifts [Eph. 4:8–12]. Then He makes them subject to Himself, so that they should teach only the Gospel and serve the kingdom of Christ alone, not seek power for themselves, nor set up empires under the pretext of religion, they are events be sacrifices, that is, endure hatred, troubles, and torments for the sake of the true doctrine, as the psalmist says [Ps. 44:22].

Therefore, when you consider that this rite was used by the earliest fathers and the apostles, not by accident or in a meaningless way, the mind should be stirred up to recognize the efficacy of this function so as to honor it and to seek signs which remind us of Christ [our] High Priest and of the work of this function. But on the other hand we should consider also corruptions in the doctrine of ordination. The sacrificing priests who perform Masses for others imagine that ordination has been established so that power might be given to make sacrifices for the living and the dead; and they even say that they offer up the Son of God and by their sacrifice merit for others the remission of sins. They also add that without this sacrifice the death of Christ is of no benefit to the church. Now though some things were drawn from unhappy imitation of the Levitical priesthood incorrectly understood, yet they have added many other things from heathen notions. These errors must be rejected; they have spawned manifold idol madness, which is undoubtedly being punished by the Turkish tyranny. But for the sake of the work of preaching the Gospel and the efficacy of this gift, it must be retained and highly honored.

But the Anabaptists despise ordination along with the ministry [and] imagine that we are to await new revelations and illuminations from God and that they are to be sought by great torments of the body, as the monks and the enthusiasts of old imagined. These fanatic absurdities are to be abominated, for they arise out of false persuasions regarding the discipline of the Law and from ignorance of the doctrine of faith.

We, on the other hand, should know that God out of immeasurable goodness has revealed His will in the Gospel, and we are to seek no other enlightenments, but faith and prayer are stirred up when this Gospel itself is proclaimed to us. And God wills that there be the public ministry, and He wonderfully preserves and continually cleanses it so that we may know that the church is bound to this Gospel which is proclaimed. Paul says this in Eph. 4[:14] when he says that the ministry of the Gospel was established in order that the Gospel might be preserved, lest [the ministry] be "tossed about by every wind of doctrine."

Confirmation

In days gone by they used to have an examination of the teaching in which individuals recited a summary of the doctrine and showed that they dis-

sented from the heathen and the heretics; and there was also the very useful practice of instructing people in how to distinguish between the profane and the godly. Afterwards there was public prayer and the apostles laid hands on them. Thus they were given manifest gifts of the Holy Spirit. But in our day the rite of confirmation, which the bishops keep for themselves, is an absolutely useless ceremony. But it would be useful to have examination and profession of teaching and public prayer for the godly, nor would that prayer be in vain.

Unction

At one time, anointing with oil was a medical concern. For God, in order to invest the fathers and the prophets with some authority, therefore equipped them from the beginning with the gift of healing, as in the case of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Isaiah, and men like them who were physicians by profession. And it is through these men that, together with the doctrine of the true religion, there was spread information about the physical world, things pertaining to plants, and other aspects of nature. Christ revived this ancient custom when He sent the apostles, ordered them to heal the sick, and equipped [them] with the gift of healing. This gift remained in the church also later, and it is certain that many are still healed by the prayers of the church. It is useful to point these things out so that we may learn that a healthy body is a gift of God which He gives us so that we might serve others. He wants this to be sought and fostered with some diligence. But the rite of anointing as it now exists is only a superstitious ceremony. And invocation of the dead was added, which is ungodly. Therefore this rite of unction with its additions is to be rejected.

Baptism

Baptism is a complete action, that is, a washing (*mersio*) and the pronouncement of the words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." And the principal significance and purpose of Baptism is found in the promise, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." Hence Baptism is properly called a sacrament because there has been added to this promise the testimony that the promise of grace truly does apply to the person who is baptized. And we should likewise believe regarding this testimony, as if God Himself with some new voice were testifying from heaven, that He receives him. Therefore when the baptized person learns the doctrine, he should exercise his faith [and] believe that he truly is received by God for the sake of Christ and is sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Baptism is to be used in this way throughout life. It should daily remind us: Behold, by this sign God testified that you have been received into grace. He does not want this testimony to be despised. Therefore you should believe that you have truly been received and you should call upon Him in this faith. This is the constant use of Baptism. In the same way circumcision was a constant testimony to Abraham, written upon his body, by which he was put in mind of the coming Seed and the blessing promised for the sake of the Seed, [and] as often as he thought about [his] circumcision, he rested in faith, believing that he pleased God and gave Him thanks and called upon Him.

Furthermore, in order that the fulness of the promise might be better seen, we must consider the words of Baptism, which include the sum of the Gospel and are a benediction by which we are consecrated to God and through which we invoke the name of God upon us. The minister says, "I, by the command of God and in the place of Christ, baptize you," that is, by this sign I bear witness that your sins are washed away and that you have been reconciled with the true God, who is the eternal God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who has sent for you His Son with marvelous and indescribable wisdom, that He might remit your sins and begin in you the new righteousness and eternal life through the Holy Spirit. This blessing consecrates us to God and separates the church from all nations, because no other nation truly invokes God as He has revealed Himself, that is, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, pleased [with us] through the Son, and sanctifying [us] through the Holy Spirit. And because the sum of the Gospel is contained in these words, the fullest consolations are offered to us here. For how pleasant it is to hear that you have so truly been accepted by God the eternal Father, because the benefits of the Son have been given to you, that God wants to rule you through [His] Holy Spirit, that He has rescued you from eternal death and from the chains of the devil! The more attentively you will consider the words of Baptism, the more will your mind be kindled with the knowledge of the mercy of God and strengthened by faith and moved to prayer.

Moreover, as the words put before us promise and comfort, so they in turn demand faith and this obligation, that we acknowledge the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Son and the Holy Spirit as the true God. Peter says of this mutual covenant, in 1 Peter 3[:21], "Baptism, which is not the removal of filth from our physical body, but the assurance of a good conscience toward God through the resurrection of Christ . . ." For he understands a mutual obligation and a mutual covenant. God declares that He receives us; this the conscience believes and clings to, and in this faith it now truly knows God and calls upon [Him.] This correct understanding about God is called a "good conscience," that is, to know God rightly and to invoke Him rightly. And there is added, "through the resurrection of Christ," for [Peter] teaches that Baptism is efficacious because of the reigning Christ, and enjoins [us] to acknowledge by faith that this reconciliation has been granted for the sake of Christ.

The Signs

I said above that there are many signs in the sacraments, but one especially, namely that of grace, must be put in first place. The rite itself also gives us a picture of this, for the washing signifies that sins are washed away for the sake of Christ and that the benefits of Christ's suffering are applied to us when we are put into the water as into the death of Christ. Nor is it out of line to add other signs. Just as the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea was a figure of the afflictions of the church and [its] deliverance, so the immersion in Baptism is a figure of afflictions and deliverance. But the other sign is preferable, which reminds us of the promise and of grace and requires faith.

Furthermore, just as it was sufficient to be circumcised once, when circumcision was commanded, so also is Baptism to take place only once, as this very weighty reason indicates: It is a sin to misuse the name of God and to reject true prayer. But those who rebaptize reject the first baptism [and] indicate that it was vain and useless. And so they reject the true invocation of God made for the person who is baptized. Therefore the ceremony itself is not to be repeated. As for the rest, we shall soon say more about the Anabaptists, who have mingled many pernicious errors with their Anabaptism.

The godly should also understand that Baptism once performed remains forever as a perpetual testimony and covenant. A new circumcision was not necessary for David after [his] fall, but that previous circumcision reminded him of both things, namely that this nature is circumcised because it is under sin and that one must come back to the promise of reconciliation for those who have fallen. Thus those who have fallen must now understand that they should not repeat the ceremony, but, reminded by the covenant which was made before, in which the Son is mentioned, which is a testimony to the remission of sins, they should return to the reconciliation set forth. Thus Baptism brings great teaching and consolation to one who has fallen, because the very mention of the Son puts us in mind of repentance and the remission of sins and testifies that those who return become members of the people of God.

The Baptism of John and of the Apostles

The entire ministry of John the Baptizer was the work of God and the beginning of a new ministry which was to follow after the Law. Therefore we should not think improperly of his baptism or that it was merely a useless spectacle. And as for some saying that it signified only repentance, not remission [of sins], this is absurd. For the preaching of repentance without remission is heathenish, and is a preaching of wrath and eternal death which is not proclaimed in the church without the preaching of remission. Hence Luke and Mark expressly say, ". . . preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins," [Luke 3:3; Mark 1:4].

Therefore, although there was a difference on this point in that John preached of the Christ who was to suffer, whereas the apostles preached of the Christ who suffered and rose again, yet the ministry was the same and had the same effects in the believers. For John taught about both things, about the remission of sins and about the efficacy of the Holy Spirit in those who believed in the Son, as he says, [Matt. 3:11], "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." Again [John 1:16], "Of His fullness we have all received," where he testifies that the believers are not received in such a way that Christ is not efficacious in them, but he teaches that the new light and righteousness are begun in them.

But why does John make a distinction, saying, "I baptize you with water, but He who is about to come after me will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire"? I reply: He is not distinguishing external ministries but persons. He wants them to understand the difference between the Messiah and ministers. Ministers only perform the outward ministry, but through it Christ is efficacious [and] for His sake and through Him is given reconciliation, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life. The ministers do not effect these things; for this reason it is necessary to differentiate the person of Christ from the ministers. Those who do not know the Gospel do not observe this distinction; they imagine that Christ is only a teacher, as the Pharisees thought, and they did not understand that He had been sent to be the sacrifice and to be the giver of new and eternal life and righteousness.

The Baptism of Infants

Paul most earnestly commands that we investigate the spirits [1 John 4:1], and Christ gives [us] the rule: "By their fruits you shall know them" [Matt. 7:16]. For it is a sure sign of a fanatic mind and one troubled by an evil spirit stubbornly to defend certain notable errors. Moreover the Anabaptists not only overthrow this one article of the baptism of infants, but they stir up many egregious errors. Their whole madness is a hodgepodge from the ravings of many ancient sects, from the Manichaeans, from the enthusiasts, and from the fables of recent Jews. They do not understand the difference between spiritual and civil righteousness. Therefore they deny that it is permissible for Christians to be a ruler, to function as a magistrate, to act as a judge, and to give an oath in court, and they contend that people must give up their personal possessions and must assign them to common ownership, and they say that spouses who are shocked at Anabaptist teaching must be abandoned.

These ravings can only arise from the devil and are the firebands of seditions. Because they do not understand the chief point of the Gospel regarding the righteousness of faith but strongly contend that man is righteous because of his own works and harsh afflic-

tions, as they themselves put it, therefore they devise for themselves other monastic works, so that they appear to be doing something new and difficult. The Anabaptists of Münster added much worse errors. They imagined, in keeping with Jewish custom, that there will be a kingdom of the godly before the resurrection, and in order to establish this kingdom, they took up seditious arms. This insanity was clearly demonic. It has forced sane people to conclude that they must flee the contagion of the Anabaptists. But even though some are more moderate, yet they retain seeds of similar ravings. Finally, they all err in regard to the sin of origin, the righteousness of faith and the external ministry. In manifest madness they abolishe the doctrine of original sin and do not consider anything to be sin except external deeds or actions which are contrary to the law of God. Now I hear that new ravings are devised by them: Christ died not to do away with sin but to abolish physical death. This idea is not only wrong, it is stupid, because to abolish death is to do away with sin. For as Paul says [Rom. 5:12], "Through sin came death." Finally, it is never only one great error which is defended, but many must be added to the mixture. Therefore it is easy to render a judgment about fanatical ideas, once such marks are gathered. And since there are clear marks of an evil spirit in the hodgepodge of the Anabaptist teachings, we must avoid their contagion and not be moved by their hypocrisy.

Moreover the following statements demonstrate that the baptism of infants is not a recent custom, but approved by the testimony of the ancient purer church. I shall list them because I do not doubt that the pious are strengthened by the example of the purer church.

Origen, on Romans 6:3 [MPG 14.1047] writes thus: "Therefore also the church has received from the apostles the tradition that baptism is to be given also to small children. For they, to whom had been entrusted the doctrines of the divine mysteries, knew that in all people there are the true stains of sin which must be washed away through water and the Spirit." These words of Origen contain a clear testimony concerning points, both original sin and the baptism of infants.

Cyprian writes that in a synod the opinion of a certain man was condemned because he did not want infants to be baptized before the eighth day. For the synod held that infants are to be baptized and that precept regarding the eighth day need not be observed.

Augustine, *De Baptismo Contra Donatistas,* 4, says in regard to the baptism of small children that the church universal holds to this, and it has not been established by councils but has always been held and handed down by apostolic authority [and] is most correctly believed.

First Argument

But we shall draw arguments also from the Gospel, and they of necessity must be valid because sound conclusions follow from absolutely sure statements. And the first absolute certainty is this: The kingdom of God, that is, the promise of grace and eternal life do not pertain only to adults but in fact to infants who also have been implanted in the church, because Christ most clearly says of infants, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven" [Matt. 19:14], and again [Matt. 18:14], "It is not the Father's will that one of these little ones should perish." These lovely voices bear witness that children on whom the name of God has been invoked are a large part of the church. Hence we ought to love and uphold these statements and not allow them to be lost through cunning cavils, as the Anabaptists contend that nothing is promised to infants but that the command to baptize is given to adults in order that they may imitate the innocence of infants who do not yet have an inclination to do wrong. This sophistry should not hinder you from believing that these statements are faithful promises which testify that these children of whom He is speaking are pleasing to God, that is, infants implanted in the church.

This also is certain, that outside the church, that is, among those on whom the name of God has not been invoked through Baptism and who are without the Gospel, there is no remission of sins and a share in eternal life, as among the enemies of Christ, blasphemers, Jews, Mohammedans, and the like. This is clearly proved by this statement, "There is no other name given to mankind whereby [we] must be saved," except the name of Jesus Christ [Acts 4:12].

In Ephesians 5 Paul, in describing the church, says [vv. 25–26], "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify it, cleansing it with the washing of water," [and] he defines the church as the kingdom of Christ which He sanctifies, and He gives to the church a sign to distinguish it from other nations [or peoples; *gentibus*], upon whom the name of Christ has not been invoked.

Again, Rom. 8[:30], "Whom He chose them He also called." Hence there is no choosing of those who are not brought into the church by an external calling. Likewise in Matt. 18[:20], "Where two or three are gathered in My name, I am in their midst." Therefore in the assembly which is not gathered in Christ's name, Christ is not present. Hence we must cling very tenaciously to the statement: Outside the church there is no remission of sins and eternal salvation. When these two principles have been established that the promise of grace applies to infants but not to infants outside the church, the conclusion clearly follows that infants must be implanted in the church through Baptism, in which the name of God is invoked upon them. The invocation of the name of God is a great thing which is done through the ministry. Therefore Christ has joined these two: "Let the little children come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Of such, that is, of those who are brought to Me [and] upon whom My name is invoked.

Therefore I have no doubt that all sane people

will be convinced by this argument: Outside the church there is no salvation, that is, where the ministry of the Gospel is not proclaimed and the sacraments are not administered. To infants pertains the promise of salvation; therefore it is necessary that infants be implanted in the church through Baptism, in which is invoked upon them the name of the eternal Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This argument is so firm that it cannot be overturned. For it can never be affirmed that salvation belongs to an infant outside the church, as the Anabaptists furiously contend without any testimony.

Second Argument

Infants are born with sin, and they are not made heirs of eternal life without the remission of sin. Now, God has established in the church the ministry of remitting sins and distributing remission through the sacraments. He wills remission to be given as we use its ministry. Hence this benefit must be given to infants through Baptism.

But because the Anabaptists completely deny the whole doctrine of the sin of origin, they display their madness even more. For if infants are without sin, Christ did not suffer for them. But we have collected in another place testimonies from the prophets and apostles which show that all who are born bring sin with them, e.g., Rom. 5[:12], "Death passed upon all people, because all have sinned," that is, they are guilty. Eph. 2:3, "We also were by nature the children of wrath," that is, guilty of or delivered over to wrath or condemned. Therefore, since there is no doubt that there is sin in infants, there must be some difference between the infants of the heathen, who remain guilty, and the infants in the church who are received by God through the ministry.

Third Argument

To whom the promise pertains to them also the sign pertains. For the sign was given for the sake of the promise. Furthermore, it is certain that the promise of grace pertains to infants. Therefore it is necessary that the sign be applied to them through the ministry by which the name of God is invoked upon them.

Fourth Argument

The command regarding baptism is universal and applies to the entire church. See John 3:5. Therefore it pertains also to infants that they might become part of the church. Nor is there any doubt that there have always been some signs by which infants in the church have been brought to God, e.g., there was circumcision of the males from [the time of] Abraham and other ceremonies by which both male and female infants were brought to God, that is, ceremonies in which the name of God was invoked upon them and the divine blessing promised to the fathers was applied to them. The patriarchs, even before Abraham, had other signs given to them by God, for it is necessary to hold to the position that infants who are in the church, upon whom the name of God has been invoked, are received into grace, not Turks [and] not Jews.

But the Anabaptists cry out [and] deny that Baptism benefits infants, since they do not understand the Word, and a ceremony without faith is worthless to those who receive it. To this I reply: It is certainly true that in all adults repentance and faith are required. But it is sufficient to hold this regarding infants, that the Holy Spirit is given to them through Baptism, and [He] effects in them new affections, new inclinations toward God in proportion to their condition. Nor is it rash to say this. For these things are certain, that infants are received by God through this ministry, likewise that the Holy Spirit is always given with the remission of sin, and that no one is pleasing to God unless he has been sanctified by the Holy Spirit, as Christ clearly says, "Except a person is born again of water and the Spirit he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Again, 1 Cor. 15[:50], "Flesh and blood," that is, without the Holy Spirit, "cannot possess the kingdom of God." And Rom. 8[:14], "Those who are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Therefore, since it is certain that these infants are part of the church and are pleasing to God, this is also certain, that God is efficacious in them, because eternal life must be begun in this life.

We should all consider these things regarding Baptism devoutly and diligently, in order that we may encourage ourselves and [our] elders with this pact and covenant, as I have said above. But particularly the young should be on their guard that they not discard the gift of Baptism nor lose the great glory which Christ proclaims regarding infants in the church: "It is not the Father's will that one of these little ones should perish" [Matt. 18:14]. Who can think of greater glory than that He affirms that these [little ones] are pleasing to God and of concern to Him? And parents with this faith regarding Baptism invoke God on behalf of their children and commend them to God; and immediately, when they can be taught, train them that they themselves call upon God and His Son, and gradually they teach them the sum of the Gospel. Finally since the children are a large part of the church, parents and teachers should know that no small treasure has been entrusted to them. Therefore they should show faithfulness and diligence in teaching and governing the youth.

The Lord's Supper

It has often been said that there is a singular and enormous blessing of God, even more admirable than the creation itself. God has revealed Himself to the human race by sure and clear testimonies, and has declared His own will for our salvation by giving us clear promises. By the voicing of these promises, He has established and gathered for Himself the church from the very beginning after taking back our first parents.

This revelation clearly convinces our minds so that they are compelled to determine that we are of concern to God, and that we are seen by Him. Therefore all the accounts of revelations which have been written must often be considered as dealing with God's reception of our fallen first parents and His giving of the first promise. He commanded Noah to build an ark, gave the new promise to Abraham, led the people out of Egypt, and (so to speak) gave to His church a sure home, that is to say, a sure place of residence. He sent His prophets, and finally His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and by raising Him from the dead and by other miracles God declared that Christ was truly sent from Him.

Further, mention is often made of the promises and the founding or establishing or restoring of the church. Just as often you should consider the testimonies added by God which come before our eyes, which are guarantees of the promises.

There are great and important reasons why these external rites have been added to the promise.

First, they are a personal admonition to those using them of the promise and of God's will toward us. Through them faith toward God is aroused in us and strengthened.

The second reason was and is that the memory of the event may be publicly more lasting and the promise more faithfully passed on to all posterity. For the rites come before our eyes over and over again, just as we see that the Gentiles have retained the rites which they have received from their fathers, even when the teaching of the fathers has been lost. Yet when the rites have become corrupted, then suddenly they devise new ideas and new idols. But it is manifest that rituals are conducive to keeping things in our memory and propagating them. And many rituals paint a picture of the promises, just as circumcision served as an instruction to Abraham and his posterity regarding the Seed. The eating of sacrificed victims instructed the fathers regarding the coming death of the Lord.

The third reason was and is that the rites may be the basis for the public gathering together. For God wills that there be the public ministry of the Gospel. He does not will that it take place in hidden places, or that the voice of the Gospel be kept shut up in secret, as in the Eleusinian mysteries. He wants it to be heard by the whole human race, and He wants Himself to be known and worshiped. Therefore, He wills that there be public and honorable gatherings, and that in these the voice of the Gospel sound forth. He wants to be worshiped and celebrated there. He wants these gatherings to be witnesses of the separation of the church of God from the sects, factions, and opinions of other Gentiles. John gathered at Ephesus with his congregation and taught the Gospel. By the use of the Sacrament the entire congregation showed that they held to this teaching and worshiped this God who had given them the Gospel, and that they had separated themselves from the worship of Diana, Jove, and other idols. For God wills that His church on earth be seen and heard, and He wills that it be separate from the many public and well-known remains of heathenism. In the same way Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Shem, and Abraham had their congregations. And later the nation of Israel had many worship rituals in order that the difference from the Gentiles might be clearly seen.

The devil always has tried and still is trying to destroy the ministry of the Gospel and scatter the flock and the gatherings of the church through tyrants and heretics. Yet out of His immeasurable mercy God has always preserved and restored both the ministry of the Gospel and the public gatherings of the church. What else are the arms of the Turks endeavoring to do except to destroy the voice of the Gospel and disperse the gatherings of the church of God? But God has promised that He will preserve His church, and He will preserve it. And in the Lord's Supper itself is included this promise, which affirms that the church of God will not be destroyed in this world. For He commands that the Lord's death shall be announced, and this Supper given, until He returns. This consolation must be a blessing for pious people. And those who retain the purity of the Gospel and the godly use of the sacraments are certainly defended and protected by this.

I have stated these points by way of preface in order that we may consider the reasons for the institution of the Lord's Supper, which is itself also a witness to the remarkable revelation of God. You hear the human words of the Supper in no other way than if you were hearing Christ Himself speaking to you, and at the same time you should think of His resurrection and His other miracles, by which God has truly revealed Himself to us. And you should understand that this Sacrament has been instituted first to instruct individuals and to arouse and strengthen faith in us; and then in order that the memory of the suffering and resurrection of Christ might be forever taught among us by this rite; and finally, that it may be the basis for the public gathering, in which the church of God shows that it is separate and distinct from the other opinions of the Gentiles.

After this introduction, we should consider four points:

First, how the Lord's Supper was instituted.

Second, whom does the eating benefit?

Third, who are to be admitted to it?

Fourth, the abuse and profanation of the Sacrament.

The First Point

The rite is described by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul. And Paul specifically says [1 Cor. 11:18], "When you come together . . . " He wants this Supper to be a ceremony of the public gathering. At the same time, He wills that the Gospel be taught in connection with it, that God be invoked through discussion of and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and that we give thanks.

Therefore He says [vv. 24, 25], "Do this in remembrance of Me."

Nor is this an empty spectacle. Christ is truly present. Through this ministry He gives His own body and blood to those who eat and drink. The ancient fathers spoke the same way. Cyril says in his *Commentary on John,* "Hence we must understand that Christ is in us not only through love, but also by participation in our nature," that is, He is present not only with His efficacy but also with His substance.

And Hilary says, "For the things which we say concerning His natural presence in us would be foolish and ungodly unless we had truly spoken as He teaches us. For He Himself says, 'The bread is truly My flesh, and the cup is truly My blood.' " And then He continues that when these things are received and consumed they cause us to be in Christ and Christ to be in us. Nor should we imagine that this is a memorial to a dead man, like the spectacles in honor of Hercules and the like. We must reject these profane notions, and having been instructed by this testimony, we should believe that Christ has truly been made a sacrifice and put to death for us, but also that He has truly been raised and reigns and is present with His church, and in this ministry He truly joins Himself to us as His members.

The Second Point

In the churches which are correctly instructed the hearers and churchgoers are to be invited to make more frequent use of the Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ and be moved to more ardent prayer and thanksgiving. But at the same time men are to be instructed about who benefits from this eating. For we must both denounce and deplore the fact that many who wish to appear as members of the church receive the Sacrament only once or twice in a decade. And at the same time because of this negligence worldly opinions thrive, prayer is forgotten, and other vices arise.

In days gone by, at the beginning of the church, the use of the Sacrament was more frequent, as the histories and the canons testify. And there is another evil against which we must contend with care and sternness, so that the unwary do not partake while in the midst of manifest vices and attend Communion without repentance.

It is useful to research the godly institution of the Sacrament in advance so that we may understand what various individuals were teaching, and so that we may teach the unlearned both what the Sacrament is and what benefit there is in using it.

Furthermore, it is manifest that in this area we must repeatedly teach that the eating is of no benefit to those who are not repentant and continue in their sins against conscience, as Paul clearly affirms [1 Cor. 11:27], "He who eats this bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." Also these who do not have the fear of God and faith, or repentance and faith, and knowingly persevere in sins contrary to conscience, are unworthy to eat. Some indulge in lusts, others in hatred and unjust desire for revenge; some pollute themselves with other kinds of iniquities knowingly, and lay plans for doing evil. These evils in themselves are displeasing to God. But Paul says that this offense is increased by new and tragic offense, because they bring shame upon the body and blood of the Lord. Then he adds still another contamination [v. 29], "He who eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body," that is, he increases his punishment not only for his previous sins but also for this crime of bringing shame upon the body of the Lord. Therefore repentance or the fear of God is necessary in those who come to Communion.

This same action indeed speaks of both repentance and faith. We celebrate the memory of the death of Christ. You hear that the body of Christ has been given for you. You hear that the blood of Christ has been shed for you. These words first instruct us regarding the great anger of God against our sins, which the virtues and merits of neither angels nor men could placate, but which must be placated by the death of the Son. And the pious mind can judge that sin is no minor evil. The many great calamities of mankind, such as diseases, exiles, torments, poverty, wars, violent death, and other plagues, are signs of the wrath of God against sin. They have been placed upon us in order that we may be instructed regarding the judgment and anger of God. But a far more graphic testimony to the terrible anger of God is the Son of God sweating blood, struggling with the wrath of God, tortured and hanging on the cross. If a person is not moved by this testimony, and is not terrified by the thought of the wrath of God and the death of Christ in this action itself and in the eating, he is not aware of what is going on here. O Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, You who have been crucified for us and raised again, kindle our minds that we may be turned to God and not despise His wrath and Your death, but truly be turned to the knowledge of Your benefits and the wonderful counsel regarding Your death.

This counsel far surpasses the universal wisdom of all created things. Therefore, You, O Jesus Christ the Son of God, should instruct us, You who have said [Luke 10:22], "No one knows the Father except the Son, and he to whom the Son has revealed Him."

Furthermore, there is also the necessity for faith which seeks and receives the remission of sins. For here [in the Sacrament] the remission of sins is offered and applied to the believer. For when it is said here, "This is the blood of the new covenant," we are being instructed regarding the entire Gospel and the entire benefit of the new covenant. And this promise requires faith, as we have said above fully. But he who does not repent neither seeks nor receives remission. Therefore by this doctrine we are taught to lift up our minds to repentance and to show faith. Thus the ones who come

worthily are the ones who seriously repent and so approach the Table of the Lord. Having been instructed by the testimony and promise of the new covenant, they strengthen their faith. And toward this end the eating by those who repent is beneficial, that is, for strengthening faith. And when by this eating a person receives the Sacrament, he also acquires the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit. If the new voice of God sounding from heaven testifies that you are received in grace, then with strong assent you will say that you will trust in God and you will thank Him. Thus it has been necessary that we believe this way regarding the use of the Sacrament. Christ bears witness by this great guarantee that you are received [by Him] and that you have become a member of His body. By this testimony you are instructed that you are truly received by Him. Thus you shall believe, and in this faith you shall call upon God and give thanks to Christ, that by His death He has satisfied the wrath of God, because He has given the Gospel and His witnesses to us.

Therefore we must reject the error of the monks and the sacrificing priests, who devise the idea that by the mere doing of the work (*ex opere operato*), as they say, the reception is of benefit without any good intention on our part. From where have these Pharisaic ravings entered the church? It clearly says [Rom. 1:17], "The just shall live by his faith." Therefore in the reception of the Sacrament it is necessary to add faith, which is thinking of many very important matters, such as the wrath of God against sin; the death of the Son of God, by which the Father is reconciled; and the giving of the Gospel and the Sacraments, by which He applies to us the promised remission of sins. For the Sacraments apply the promise to individuals. And in this action Christ joins us to Himself as His members.

By thinking of such things, and by faith when we call upon God, and with Christ, our high priest, leading us, we draw near to Him, and our hearts are set on fire by the Holy Spirit. Therefore the external voice of the Gospel sounds forth, so that hearts may receive it by faith, as Paul says [Rom. 10:17], "Faith comes from hearing." Thus the outward action of the Sacrament is conducted so that it may instruct our hearts and kindle faith, not that it may be an end in itself and merit reconciliation.

Now, after we have spoken regarding the principal purpose [of the Sacrament], namely, the strengthening of faith, then it is correct to add many other purposes. For there can be many goals for this one action, but they come in a particular order.

Of necessity for the strengthening of faith we need to add the next purpose, that is, the giving of thanks. Thus the name that is given to this ceremony is the Eucharist. For at this point in the teaching of this matter we must remember the benefits of Christ. In public proclamation and in our private prayers we must give clear expression of thanksgiving:

Almighty God, the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Creator of all things and Preserver of them together with Your coeternal Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and Your Holy Spirit, have mercy on me for the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ. With marvelous wisdom and inerrant counsel You have willed Him to be made a sacrifice for us; and at the same time You have shown Your wrath against sin and Your immeasurable mercy toward the human race. Sanctify, guide, and aid me by Your Holy Spirit. Guide and preserve Your church and Your governments, which are protectors of the churches.

I give You thanks, Almighty God, eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Creator and Preserver of all things, together with Your coeternal Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and Your Holy Spirit, that in your immeasurable goodness You have revealed to Your church also Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, that He might be made a sacrifice for us and that through Him there is given to us the remission of sins and life everlasting. You bestow these great blessings of Yours to us through the Gospel and the Sacraments. You preserve the church and the ministry of the Gospel, and do not allow them to be destroyed. God, grant that we may be able to consider and celebrate with grateful and burning hearts this great goodness of Yours and the enormous benefits. But I pray that You would raise us up by Your Holy Spirit, so that our minds may be truly grateful and that gratitude may shine forth in our lives, etc.

To You also, O Jesus Christ, Son of God, crucified and raised for us, I give thanks that in Your great love for us You have interceded with the eternal Father for the human race and have been made a sacrificial victim for us and have drawn down upon Yourself the wrath of God toward our sins. Kindle our hearts so that we may rejoice in true gratitude for Your enormous benefit, which is beyond our understanding, etc.

The uneducated should use this kind of formula, so that they may arouse themselves to meditating about these great things. For faith is cultivated and kindled by thinking about such things. The mind is moved when you meditate upon the stern righteousness of God, which does not remit sins without a price, and therefore He is frightfully angry at sin. But how great is the love of the Son in that He intercedes for us and takes this wrath upon Himself? How great was His rejection? He was cast down before God, experiencing His wrath as one who had been polluted with your sins and the sins of the most wicked of men—scoundrels, idolators, adulterers, and other criminals. How shall we survive? Because the Son of God subjected Himself to such great humiliation. It is salutary to think of such things in our giving of thanks.

Now we come to the third purpose [of the Sacrament], namely, that your example is of benefit to preserve the entire congregation in its public gathering. For if only a few use the Sacrament, little by little people will be led away from the services. Finally, the church

will almost entirely neglect public worship, preaching, and the Sacrament, as has happened in a great part of the world, where the sacrificing priest only reads masses, and the people are absent from the churches and do not hear sermons and do not understand the use of the Sacrament itself.

Furthermore, it is the command of God that individuals by their example invite others to the public services, as the precept about the Sabbath teaches. For God wills that there be the public ministry. He wills that the voice of the Gospel sound forth publicly. He wills that all people hear and learn it. And He promises that He will be with these gatherings and will hear their prayers, as it clearly says in Matt. 18[:20], "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am in the midst of them," [and v. 19], "If two people agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven." With this most beautiful promise Christ commends to us the public gathering together. He wants us to love the congregation. He wants the church to be people in fellowship. He hates things which tear it apart and destroy it.

The fourth purpose [of the Sacrament] is the confession of doctrine. When you take the Sacrament, you are showing that you accept the teaching of His church and that you want to be a member of His congregation, with which you are eating the Lamb [of God].

The fifth purpose is that eating together is a bond of mutual love. In olden times it was very common in drawing up covenants or treaties to eat the same consecrated food. And Paul teaches that this Communion is a bond of mutual love [1 Cor. 10:17], "As there is one bread, so we, being many, are one body." We need to understand these points regarding the purposes so that the principal purpose is not omitted, and so that nothing is added which would conflict with the principal purpose and which would corrupt the doctrine of the true use of the Sacrament and the exercise of faith.

The Third Point

Those who are to be admitted to the Sacrament can be easily identified from Paul's statement [1 Cor. 11:27, 29], "He who eats unworthily . . . eats judgment to himself." They participate unworthily, as the passage says, if they persevere in their sins contrary to conscience, whether overtly or covertly; likewise, if they do not come with repentance and faith.

But the ministers cannot judge except concerning manifest sins. Therefore they must prohibit those who are polluted with manifest sins and do not mend their ways. And they must remember the precept [Matt. 7:6], "Do not give that which is holy to dogs."

This also pertains to the work of pastors. They are to determine the doctrine and faith of individuals among the people. And it is our obligation as individuals among the pastors to confess our faith and demonstrate what we believe regarding doctrine, as Peter says [1 Pet. 3:15], "We should be ready to give an account of our faith."

But those who are repentant and truly ashamed should not flee from using the Sacrament because of previous lapses. They should understand that this great guarantee is given here in order that faith might be kindled and strengthened regarding the remission of sins, and that when the mind has been reconciled to God it may again invoke Him and serve Him with a good conscience. The mind should not trust in its own worthiness and purity. The prodigal son returned to his father and did not put forth his own good works or merits, but acknowledged, accused, and deplored his own guilt. So also we must acknowledge our sins and accuse them and flee for mercy, which has been promised for the sake of Christ. And this very Supper is a seal of His mercy. In it Christ joins us to Himself as His members, and testifies that the remission of sins is given to us freely, that is, not because of our worthiness, but because He Himself was made a sacrifice for us. When we meditate piously on these things in our prayer and use the Sacrament, we can understand more fully from these exercises of faith than from long disputations. And a comparison of these things easily points out the misuses of the Sacrament.

The Fourth Point

In opposition to the godly use of this Sacrament (of which I have been speaking), they have brought into the church horrendous profanations, which we must attack and destroy in keeping with the statement [1 Cor. 10:14], "Flee idolatry." First, we must cling firmly to the clear rule: The outward observance does not have the character of a Sacrament. That is, it is not a sign of grace which is pleasing to God when something is set up outside or beside the Word of God, or when the ceremony is changed into a work of a different kind, that is, when a different purpose is set forth than that which has been established by God. Examples would be when a person carries around the water of baptism to be looked at and teaches that the Holy Spirit is enclosed in it, or when someone uses baptism to cleanse a leper. In this way the Jewish and Turkish circumcision does not have the character of a sacrament, that is, it is not pleasing to God but is an ungodly spectacle which is condemned by God, for it takes place contrary to the Word of God.

On the basis of this example the many clear abuses of the Lord's Supper can be judged. There is the spectacle in which the bread is carried around but is definitely not eaten. But Christ says [Matt. 26:26], "Take and eat." It in no way squares with the character of a sacrament to carry it around and bind Christ to that place without any divine Word. Thus the ceremony is changed into a work of a different kind when they say that they are offering the Son of God for the living and the dead, and that this merits for them the forgiveness of sins. It is a great departure from the institution when

the Sacrament is given to obtain good things for the body, for victory, for success in a business venture, or to dispel disease. When the priest offers the Sacrament so that it may bestow these good things, this is done with a different purpose than that for which it was instituted. But most alien to this is the fact that since the priests are ignorant of what they are doing, they are performing this so-called offering only for the sake of their belly.

Further, I know that these abuses are most tenaciously and stubbornly defended, excused by the most prestigious and astute thinkers and painted with all kinds of colors. But the godly must encourage the godly to flee this horrendous profanation under the rubric [1 Cor. 10:14], "Flee idolatry," and they must teach the godly use of the Sacrament. Moreover, just as public calamities, the fall of kingdoms, wars, devastations, seditions, the ravings of princes, famines, and pestilences have always been the punishments for these sins—especially the worship of idols, unjust murders, and lusts—so I believe that the arms of the Turks are attacking us because of the idols which have been brought into the church: the profanations of masses, the prayers for the dead, and the wild lusts. Therefore we must pray that the Son of God would correct these errors and mitigate the punishments.

But there is no need for a long disputation in a matter which is obvious. Just as in ancient times the Pharisaic priests imagined that they merited the remission of sins by their sacrifices, so today monks and priests imagine that by their sacrifice they are meriting the remission of sins for themselves and others, both living and dead. In this error are contained many false and pernicious persuasions, namely, that the one passion of Christ did not make satisfaction for the whole church, and that therefore men should seek reconciliation for the sake of this sacrifice by the priest, and not by confidence in the mercy which was promised for the sake of the Son of God, who was crucified for us. And many other errors follow from this.

We must put the true doctrine of the merit of the suffering of Christ in opposition to these ravings, as it says in Heb. 10[:14], "By one offering He has perfected the saints." Therefore the death of Christ alone was the sacrifice for all our sins, not the works of the Levitical law or some later law.

Also it is clear that we receive the remission of sins by faith, for the sake of Christ, not because of any work of ours or of the priest, as it says in that most noteworthy and firm statement [Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17], "The righteous man shall live by his faith." From these words it is easy for all godly people to judge the horrendous abuses defended by the priests who are bringing the Lord's Supper into question.

Finally, where do they get the idea that they are offering up the Son of God? It is a very important matter to offer a sacrifice. To sacrifice is to acknowledge the wrath of God against the sins of the human race, to subject oneself to this wrath, to be the mediator between God and the human race, and to enter into the holy of holies with God. Therefore it is said in Heb. 9[:12], "Through His own blood He entered once into the holy of holies, having obtained eternal redemption." Again [v. 14], "who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God." Christ offered Himself. We are to acknowledge that this sacrifice was made by Him, and believe that through it the eternal Father has been reconciled to us, and we should give thanks for it. Godly people should consider these things and seek out the true testimonies of the ancient church. I know that many people are gathering many worthless testimonies from more recent times. But diligence is necessary in order that the godly may be able to distinguish useless and adulterated testimonies from those which are true. Therefore we should retain the practice of the apostles, which remained in use by the apostles for about thirty years in the church: pious readings were recited, the people were instructed by a beneficial sermon, prayers were offered, and then the words of Christ regarding the Supper were recited and the Sacrament was distributed to the godly who were examining themselves and praying, and finally a prayer of thanksgiving was spoken. This should be done so that there will not be any private sacrifices by individuals.

Because this subject requires an explanation showing what a sacrifice is and whether there is one understanding of the term, I will add that exposition, as I indeed consider necessary.

Sacrifice

Although it seems childish to distinguish between the words "sacrament" and "sacrifice," yet the situation demands that in religious ceremonies the difference be observed and boundaries defined. Some ceremonies are signs and notices of promises in which God shows something to us; but other ceremonies are not properly the signs of promises, but works which we render to God.

It is necessary in the case of ceremonies to note the distinctions on account of which we use certain words. And since the words "sacrament" and "sacrifice" are in common use, we shall retain them also. Thus a sacrament is a ceremony which is a sign of a promise whereby God promises or shows something to us. Circumcision was a sign by which God promised that He would receive those who had been circumcised. Baptism is a sign that God is with us and receives us into grace and in a sense baptizes us Himself. For the minister baptizes us in the stead of Christ. A sacrifice is a ceremony or a work of ours which we render to God so that we honor Him, that is, we bear witness that we acknowledge that He to whom we give obedience is the true God, and for this reason we do render Him this obedience.

There are two kinds of sacrifices which are very similar to one another, and there are no others. There is the propitiatory sacrifice, that is, a work which merits for some the remission of guilt and eternal punishment, or a work which reconciles God and placates the wrath of God on behalf of some people and is a means of satisfaction for sin and eternal punishment. The second kind of sacrifice is the eucharistic sacrifice which does not merit the remission of sins or reconciliation, but comes from those who have been reconciled, so that we give thanks to God for the remission of sins which we have received and for His other benefits, or we return thanks by means of our obedience. This distinction can be clearly shown from the Epistle to the Hebrews [10:1–18] which teaches that there was only one propitiatory sacrifice made in the world. Therefore, there remain all the other works in which those who have been reconciled must demonstrate their obedience.

Furthermore, under these two kinds, which I have mentioned, can be distributed all the Levitical sacrifices in their proper locations. For certain of these are mentioned in the law as propitiatory sacrifices because of their signification or similarity, not because they merited the remission of sins before God, but because they signified or were a sign of the sacrifice of Christ which was to come. But there they merited the remission of sins in outward life, that is, so that they were not excluded from the Mosaic civil life. Thus they were called propitiatory sacrifices for sin [sin offerings] or sacrifices for transgressions, and these were called burnt offerings or holocausts. But the eucharistic sacrifices were called oblations, libations, recompenses, first fruits, or tithes.

But the truth is that in the whole world there was only one propitiatory sacrifice, namely, the suffering or death of Christ, as the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches [10:4], "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." And a little later [v. 10] concerning the will of Christ it says, "And by that will we have been sanctified through the sacrifice of the body of Christ once for all."

For Christ Himself also applies His own sacrifice to us when He prays for us, John 17:19 ff. "For them I sanctify Myself that they may also be truly sanctified. I do not pray only for them, but also for those who shall believe in Me through their word." These are truly the words of our pope and high priest by which He offers Himself for the whole church and prays for the church, something which we must always remember and keep in our mind. Isaiah also interprets the law so that we may know that the death of Christ is the true satisfaction or expiation for our sins, and not the ceremonies of the law. Thus he says in 53:10, "After He has given His life as an offering for sins, He shall see His offspring and prolong His days," as if he were saying that another sacrifice remains which will truly take away sin and death. Therefore these customary ceremonies do not take away sin and death. Paul corroborates this interpretation when he says, "He was made a curse," [Gal. 3:13] and again, "Because of sin He condemned sin," [Rom. 8:3], that is, He punished sin and destroyed it through His sacrifice for sin. For the Hebrews called this very sacrifice a sin—or transgression—offering, just as the Latins speak of a sin offering [*piaculum*]. Therefore we should cling to the fact that in the history of the world there was only this unique [*unicum*] propitiatory sacrifice. For those sacrifices which are spoken of in the law as propitiatory, as I have said, are called by this name because of their similarity, and thus they have been abolished after Christ appeared. Moreover, since the Gospel has promised that it would offer true propitiation, it is necessary that the Levitical ceremonies would not be true propitiations, because they ceased with the revelation of the Gospel.

The Sacrifice of Thanksgiving

In our era eucharistic sacrifices still remain. They are called sacrifices of praise, the preaching of the Gospel, faith, invocation, the giving of thanks, confession, the afflictions of the saints, indeed all the good works of the saints. These sacrifices are not satisfactions for those who perform them, nor do they apply to others so that they might merit *ex opere operato* the remission of sins or reconciliation. And thus besides the one propitiatory sacrifice, namely, the death of Christ, the other sacrifices in the New Testament are only eucharistic sacrifices, as Peter teaches in 1 Peter 2:5, "a holy priesthood, that you should offer spiritual sacrifices." Further, these spiritual sacrifices are put in opposition not only to the sacrifices of bulls but also to human works which are offered in a purely external way *ex opere operato*, that is, without faith and the good intention of the heart, because the word "spiritual" refers to the actions of the Holy Spirit within us. And concerning these sacrifices the Epistle to the Hebrews also speaks in 13:15, "Through Him we always offer to God the sacrifice of praise." And the author adds the interpretation, "the fruit of the lips which confess His name," that is, prayer, thanksgiving, confession, and the like. These things have value not from the mere external doing of them *ex opere operato*, but because of faith. The preposition teaches us this: through Him [v. 15] we make our offering, that is, through faith in Christ. Further, there is great consolation for the Christian mind to know that all good works and all afflictions are sacrifices, that is, works which are pleasing to God and which God pronounces an honor to Him.

There are many statements concerning this kind of sacrifice in the Psalms and the Prophets, for example, Ps. 50:14–15, "Make a sacrifice of praise to God . . . Call upon Me in the day of trouble." Again, Ps. 51:17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit."

In the second place we should know that in the New Testament worship is spiritual, that is, it is the

righteousness of faith and the fruit of faith; because the new testament offers righteousness and eternal and spiritual life, according to the statement [Jer. 31:33], "I will put My law in their hearts." And Christ says [John 4:23], "The true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth," that is, with true heart-felt emotion. And the Levitical forms of worship have been abrogated because the spiritual worship of the mind must follow and the fruits and signs of it.

From this it follows that there is no sacrifice or worship in the New Testament which merits for the doer or others the remission of sins *ex opere operato.* For this is directly opposed to the statement "The true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth." Indeed it is a Pharisaic notion that a worship form merits the remission of sins *ex opere operato.* And although because of this notion the Jews kept piling up their forms of worship, with the purpose that they might merit much grace and other benefits, yet the prophets sharply contended against this piling up of worship forms. Psalm 50, which requires invocation and the repudiation of sacrifices, condemns this notion, when it says in v. 13, "Do I eat the flesh of bulls?" And in Is. 1:11, "What are the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" And Jer. 7:22 ff., "I did not speak with your fathers or command them . . . regarding burnt offerings and sacrifices." And it is evident that the law gives command concerning sacrifices. But the prophet condemns the notion of *ex opere operato.* God does not require such sacrifices. In the church under a similar persuasion masses are piled high, because they are [considered] sacrifices which are pleasing to God *ex opere operato* and merit for the one who performs them and for others the remission of sins. For they taught that through the mass the sacrifice of Christ is applied [to the sinner]. But let each person through his own faith apply or appropriate to himself the sacrifice of Christ, and indeed freely, that is, not because of the work of another.

But there can be many purposes for one work. We use the Lord's Supper as a sacrament inasfar as it is a testimony by which faith is guided. Secondly, this faith itself with the outward participation in the sacrament is a kind of sacrifice, because God pronounces that this faith, and exercises of this kind, in the New Testament are sacrifices of praise and a form of worship. Thus, this spiritual obedience itself becomes a kind of sacrifice by which honor is given to God which He requires and approves. Then, since with this faith there is of necessity joined the giving of thanks for the highest benefit which He has bestowed upon us and the church, thus it is called a *eucharistia* (a sacrifice of thanksgiving). Besides this there is also the need for confession; for we have shown that we believe the Gospel and should invite others to follow our example. All these things are eucharistic sacrifices. Therefore the ancients called this ceremony [the Lord's Supper] a sacrifice.

But the point which some are arguing, that it is of the nature of a certain kind of sacrifice that it be applied to someone else, is false. For our afflictions are sacrifices, and yet they are not to be applied to others, in keeping with the statement [1 Cor. 3:8], "Each one will receive his own reward in keeping with his own labor." Again [Gal. 6:4] "Let each prove his own work, and thus he shall have glory in himself." Again, [Hab. 2:4], "The just shall live by his own faith." The parable of the foolish virgins proves the same point. Besides, since our works are worship which must be performed by us, as Paul says [Rom. 8:12], "We are debtors," and again [1 Cor. 9:16], "Woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel," therefore, since they are insufficient in and of themselves and require faith which seeks that our weakness not be laid to our charge or imputed to us, what arrogance it will be if we conclude that such works are not only rewards for us, but also for others, since Christ says [Luke 17:10], "When you have done all things, say, 'We are unprofitable servants.' " Likewise Ps. 50:14 ff. calls invocation in "the day of trouble" a sacrifice, likewise "the giving of thanks." Furthermore, this work, when we give thanks, is not a work which we can apply for the sake of others, so that there is a benefit for them because of the worthiness of the work. Therefore, it is a false persuasion that it is the nature of a sacrifice that it be applied for the sake of others. For only the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ was to be applied for others. Our other sacrifices which are eucharistic are beneficial to those who perform them in the same way that a good work is profitable for the one who does it, but they are not to be applied in such a way that they merit for others the remission of their sins.

But prayer for others has an entirely different nature than works, for it does not offer any work to God which is the price for others, but it only desires to receive from God. And God has promised that He will give both to us and to others the things for which we pray. This can be easily discerned. In prayer we do not oppose God, nor do we offer Him any work of ours as a price for others, but we only wish to receive from God, and this indeed for the sake of the mediator, Christ, as it is written [John 14:13], "Whatsoever you ask the Father in My name He will give to you." It is one thing to deal with God in faith and not on account of any work of ours; it is another thing to put before to God the merit of some particular work, and this on behalf of others. Therefore, the application of our works on behalf of others, especially for the remission of sins, must never be permitted, for it is written [Hab. 2:4], "The just shall live by his own faith." In addition, we need to know this about works: just as some are punished for the sins of others, so the righteousness of a few obtains many good things for others. There are many testimonies and examples of this sentiment in Scripture: Jer. 49[:12], "Behold, they whose judgment it was not to drink the cup have surely drunk." And concerning public and individual benefits, Isaiah 33[:15–17] says, "He who walks uprightly and speaks the truth, who rejects av-

arice and shakes his hands lest they hold a bribe, who shuts his ears so that they do not hear of bloodshed, and closes his eyes, so that they see no evil, he shall dwell on high, his places of defense will be fortresses of rocks, bread will be given to him, his water supply shall be sure, his eyes shall see the king in his beauty and a land which stretches far." Among his other rewards He promises that the state of the public realm will be more tranquil, that is, a common benefit which pertains to many people. There are examples of this. Because of the sin of David the people were punished [cf. 2 Sam. 24]. Because of a few righteous people God was willing to spare the people of Sodom [cf. Gen. 18:22 ff.]; because of Naaman He blessed the king of Syria [cf. 2 Kings 5:1]. Thus we should learn that punishments and rewards spread far and wide, in order that we should be motivated to perform good works.

But yet in such situations we must remember these two things: first, that these points do not refer to the matter of our justification, that is, that for the unrighteous the works of others, such as the saints, are of no benefit to their justification, but for the righteous they do obtain many common benefits, because we are members of the common body. The second thing is that it is not within our power to apply our merits to others, because this would be a certain confidence in our own works. But we must permit God to give us the common or particular rewards that He wishes. But prayer is applied on behalf of others, because it does not rely on our own worthiness but on the gracious promise of Christ. From what we have said, it is easy to determine what we ought to think concerning application. For that which pertains to our justification is not an application without our own faith. But faith uses as its instruments the Word and the sacraments, which testify that the benefit of Christ does apply to us, and this benefit does not depend on the worthiness of the work of another person. These points should be sufficient concerning the shamefulness of the mass.

Repentance

When certain people told Christ about the cruel action of Pilate, who had killed certain Galileans and had compelled others to drink in their sacrifices the blood of those who had been killed, Christ in replying did not accuse Pilate by name, but rather he warned His hearers and testified that they also were guilty, and He urged them to repent, saying in Luke 13[:3], "Unless you repent you shall likewise perish." Thus we should understand that all the calamities in the world are warnings to us all to repent.

In this life, even in the saints, many sins remain which we must acknowledge and deplore with sincere repentance. Furthermore, there are others who have lapses contrary to conscience and are outside the grace of God, who, unless in this life they are converted to God, are running into eternal punishments and will forever be the enemies of God. Therefore, the chief voice of God is spoken in the church [Mk. 1:15], "Repent and believe the Gospel," that they may be delivered from eternal destruction. This was the first preaching in paradise, when God cursed our first parents after the fall and then added the absolution with the giving of the faint promise of the coming deliverer. Thus always thereafter in the church the patriarchs, the prophets, Christ, the apostles, and all faithful ministers of the Word of God have clung to these two kinds of teaching, and have declared the wrath of God against sin. They have shown that because of sin the human race in enormous calamities also is subject to the eternal punishment which is coming upon all who are not converted to God. And, secondly, they also held forth remission for those who were terrified in their sins and clung in faith to the Son of God and made a beginning in obedience in keeping with the Word of God.

Therefore, in order that we may be moved to repent, we should learn the entire doctrine concerning this article and meditate upon it carefully. We must gather all the testimonies concerning the wrath of God against sin, concerning personal and public calamities of all times, the warning of eternal punishments, and finally the death of the Son of God. For this last is the clearest possible proof of all concerning the wrath of God against sin. Nor should we imagine that this is merely some idle spectacle. It is necessary that the wrath of God against sin be serious, enormous, and indescribable, since it cannot be placated unless the Son intercedes for us and is made a victim for us. If the human race correctly understands this testimony, all people should be devastated with sudden fear, and yet in the meantime the world despises these testimonies in ungodly carnal security.

But we must get rid of this security and be moved by these terrifying works of God and again consider the greatness of His mercy because God has not willed that the whole human race should perish. He has revealed Himself to us so that He might be recognized and invoked, because God has given His Son for us that He might be the Emmanuel, that is, God with us, and walk among us as our helper and Savior, because He has given the promise of grace and eternal life, because He gives His Holy Spirit as the guardian of those who seek Him. When we consider all of these things, we must confess our hardness of heart and lament it and pray that God would turn us to Himself. He has surely promised that He will give His Holy Spirit to those who seek Him. He commands us to believe that we are received by Him for the sake of the Son, as we shall teach below.

I have prefaced these points in order that we may move ourselves to earnest consideration of this article. Now I shall speak about the name. I do not wish to get into an argument over the terminology. I use the term "repentance" as we use it in the church, as a turning to God, and I distinguish, for the sake of teaching the

subject, two parts or different activities. These two parts I call contrition and faith. Of necessity the new obedience must follow, which if a person wishes to call the third part of repentance, I will not quarrel with him. So let us not stir up controversies over words, but we must be vigilant in observing the substantive aspects of the matter which are necessary for the church in refuting errors that bring darkness and confusion upon the true doctrine.

But before explaining the two divisions of the subject, we must briefly refute two errors of fanatical men who have dreamed up the notion that the regenerate cannot fall and that even though they fall contrary to conscience, yet they are still righteous. This insanity must be condemned, and examples put in opposition along with statements of Scripture from the prophets and apostles, such as that Saul and David were pleasing to God and were righteous and received the Holy Spirit, even though they later fell so greatly that the one utterly perished and the other was again turned to God. There are many statements which deal with this matter, such as Matt. 12[:43–45], "When the unclean spirit has gone forth from the man, he wanders in deserted places . . . and says, 'I will return,' . . . and he finds the place empty, . . . and the last conditions of that man become worse than the first."

Similar is the very sad message in 2 Pet. 2[:20], "If, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord . . . they are again entangled . . . the last state has become worse than the first." And 1 Cor. 10[:12], "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." And Rev. 2[:5], "Remember from whence you have fallen, and repent and do your former works."

These and other passages concerning the regenerate bear witness that they can indeed fall, and that those who have fallen contrary to conscience are not pleasing to God unless they are again converted. Therefore, let us not fool ourselves that in our security we need not control our weakness, but let us be on watch and alert, let us fight against our infirmity and take extremely great care to avoid the pitfalls of the devil, as Peter warns [1 Pet. 5:8], "Your adversary the devil walks about as a raging lion seeking whom he may devour. Resist him strongly and in faith."

On the other hand, we must not let our despair take over, for this produces a hatred against God just as the Novatians and the Cathari did who denied that those who had fallen after baptism could again obtain the remission of sins. This crass and poisonous error, which in ancient times flourished so widely, is astonishing!

Epiphanius tells that at Alexandria, when Peter was the bishop whom the tyrant Maximinus put to death, there was a certain Meletius, who along with crying loudly against Peter, spread the ridiculous notion that forgiveness was to be denied those who had fallen. He added this to his hypocrisy with such marvelous skill that the majority of the people in Egypt and Syria followed this Meletius and despised the opinion of Peter. And this is a memorable matter because he tells that Peter, in the defense of the truth, cited both the Scriptures and the examples of earlier history which had been handed down from the apostles and their followers. And we still see an example in the history of John the apostle as recorded in Eusebius, book 3, p. 60 [book III, chap. 23, para 6–19], of a young man who had fallen away whom John reclaimed from a band of thieves. Further, the raving of the Cathari is sufficiently demonstrated to have arisen from their ignorance of the doctrine of the righteousness of faith. For after they had developed the idea that hypocritical men are righteous by reason of their own worthiness and without sin, then they dreamed up the idea that if this purity was lost, there was no longer any hope for forgiveness.

Furthermore, we must on the basis of Scripture cite testimonies which oppose these notions. For example, David, Manasseh and Peter after frightful lapses again achieved the remission of sins. The church of the Galatians had fallen away, and was called to repentance by Paul. Likewise Paul himself commanded the incestuous man at Corinth to be received back after he had repented, 2 Cor. 2[:6–8].

We are adding other statements of Scripture: Ezek. 33[:11], "As I live," says the Lord, "I do not desire the death of a sinner, but that he should be converted and live." And there are other similar statements in the prophets, such as, Is. 1[:18 ff.]. This passage in Ezekiel is more memorable, because there is added to it the oath, "As I live," in order that consciences may be guided not only when they hear the promise but also when the promise is confirmed by an oath. Therefore, we should firmly impress this comfort in our minds and consider how great the power of divine love is toward us which ardently desires our salvation, as it is so correctly stated in Tobit, "You are not delighted, O God, in our being lost." And by thoughts of this kind we must urge ourselves to repentance and true invocation.

There is no value at this point for the sophistry that the Old Testament has a blessing which is different from that in the New Testament concerning the conversion of those who have fallen. For the message of Ezekiel pertains to the universal church of all ages, and the church of all ages is the same and the Gospel is the same.

But let us take up the proofs from the New Testament. Christ says, Matt. 18[:15],"If your brother sins against you, correct him; and if he hears you, you have gained your brother." When He says, "you have gained your brother," He is clearly asserting that He is speaking of those for whom this correction is beneficial. And because He is speaking about brothers, that is, about those who have fallen after justification, He is also testifying to the fact that He still wills that he be cast out of the church if he does not hear; therefore He is speaking about those who had previously been in the church.

And then when Peter [Matt. 18:21] asks, "How many times shall I forgive?" Christ replies, "Till seventy times seven." Therefore, those who have lapsed after justification can obtain forgiveness. For when He commands the church to forgive, He Himself also wills to forgive the person who repents and believes. Therefore, He said previously, "You have gained your brother."

I realize that it is argued by some whether this passage is speaking about fraternal reconciliation or about the public ministry which pronounces the remission of sins. But it is a valid argument against the Novatians, even if the text is applied only to fraternal reconciliation, for He says, "You have gained your brother." In [Matt. 18:18] He says, "Whatsoever you shall loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." And these words also testify that this passage is teaching about the ministry. For Christ has willed to establish the discipline of the church and the correction of those who have fallen, and they say that this practice was instituted by the old synagogue. Christ also wanted to distinguish the correction which belonged to the church from that of civil government. He wills that admonition come first in order that the first concern shall be the salvation of the man. Civil discipline is more rigorous, it hastens to punish, and it does not deliberate beforehand about the salvation of the person. Then Christ has also established the method of punishment. He wills that the unrepentant person be put out of the church, but he does not add civil punishments, but leaves these to the magistrates.

But let us return to the Scripture passages. Gal. 6[:1] says, "If a person is apprehended in some sin, you who are spiritual should correct him in a spirit of gentleness." Here he commands that the fallen be recalled to repentance. Rev. 2[:5], "Remember from whence you have fallen and repent and do your former works." Luke 15[:7], "There is joy among the angels over one sinner who repents." In this teaching Christ is speaking of the repentance of the prodigal son, that is, about people who were previously godly.

But the Novatians raise objection to this by citing two passages from the Epistle to the Hebrews: Heb. 6[:4 ff.], "It is impossible to bring to repentance those who have once been enlightened." Although this seems to be a harsh passage, if the conscience has been fortified by the true testimonies cited above it cannot be terrified by this passage. But after it has been established as a matter of certainty by the testimonies quoted above that we cannot deny forgiveness to those who have fallen away, then it is a simple matter to judge that this statement cannot be retained at this point, but it must be added that its interpretation is not difficult. Some soften it in one direction and place it among obscure or ambiguous passages on the grounds that in the Greek it does not sound so difficult. For it says, "It is not possible that they be called back to repentance who crucify Christ and hold Him in derision." In the simplest possible terms, I understand this passage as having this meaning: such people cannot be called back to repentance who do not heed the Gospel more fully, but despise it, and are not eager to retain the beginnings of godliness of which I have spoken, namely, baptism and the doctrine of repentance. It seems to me indeed that this is the true meaning of the passage and there is nothing wrong with this interpretation, inasfar as they cannot be called to repentance unless they hear the Gospel, but instead they crucify Christ and heap shame upon Him.

We must confess also that there is an unforgivable sin because Christ expressly affirms the fact. And this passage from the Epistle to the Hebrews is applied to this sin. But here some raise the objection that this makes forgiveness a matter of uncertainty since a certain sin is unforgivable. For our mind will always be in a state of anxiety when it thinks that perhaps it has committed this sin, and this question bothers many people, but for those who are godly the explanation is plain and simple.

There is an unforgivable sin, but what it is must be judged only *a posteriori,* that is, it must be attributed to those who persevere until the end in their ragings against God in Epicurean contempt or Pharisaic hatred or hopelessness, as in the case of Nero, Pharaoh, Saul, Judas, and others like them. Nor can the determination concerning the unforgivable sin be made in anyway other than *a posteriori;* because in our hearts, before this judgment has been revealed, we must always retain these three things: the promise of grace, the commandment which directs us to believe in the Son, and the commandment given to the church to loose sins [Matt. 18:18], "Whatsoever you shall loose on earth." The promise is explained by Paul in these very lovely words [Rom. 5:20],"Grace abounded over sin." It is the height of blasphemy to cast Christ aside for the sake of sin and to diminish His merit. Further, it is an eternal and immutable command and far above the law that we are to believe in Christ. And these are universals—the promise and the command—as it is said [Matt. 11:28], "Come unto me all you who labor." And each should include himself in this universal.

After the mind has been strengthened and knows that it is God's command that we believe that all sins are forgiven us, then the mind must learn that we are not to judge regarding the unforgivable sin except *a posteriori,* that is to say, after the judgment of God has been declared. Pharaoh and Judas committed such a sin because their actions showed that they did not return to God. Thus Augustine says it very well when he says that blasphemy is the final impenitence or despair, for these sins contend against grace to the end. For other sins are remitted when we flee to grace. But Epicurean contempt or despair repudiates grace. Therefore the statement of Christ [Matt. 12:32], "He who speaks a word against the Holy Spirit," that is, he who stubbornly and to the end resists the preached Word

which is confirmed by the testimonies of the Spirit, should be interpreted as meaning that such a person has committed the unpardonable sin. The statement of Augustine is quite adequate.

For not every lapse against the known truth must be judged to be an unforgivable sin, as the Novatians contended. For we have shown above examples and testimonies which teach that such lapses can be forgiven, and not every persecution of the Gospel must be judged as an unpardonable sin, because Manasseh, Nebuchadnezzar, Paul, Justin, Augustine, and finally countless other persecutors have been forgiven, as Peter also says [Acts 4:10], "whom you crucified." But certain people have a special fury. They have known the truth, they have been admonished, they have been convicted of acting against conscience, and yet they are without faith and condemn the truth and practice and grow strong in their fierce opposition. Of such people it is said [in] Rom. 11[:7, 8], "The rest have become hardened, and God has given to them a spirit of insensibility; eyes that they should not see, ears that they should not hear." By this statement and others like it they are described as people who persevere in their persecution of the Gospel, and even after they have been admonished they will not return to God. Such was the fury of the Anabaptists at Münster.

Thus, having been instructed by statements like this and examples we must be on our guard that we not contend for errors. It is common to all men to fall and to err, but the stubbornness which gives birth endlessly to sophistic pretenses is a greater and more serious sin under which many people struggle. Therefore, Paul says [Titus 3:10], "The man who is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject, because he is condemned by his own judgment," that is, by his stubbornness he demonstrates that he is caught in the traps of the devil.

But we must always keep in our mind this teaching that we must obey the command and the promise of the Gospel. It is an eternal and immutable mandate which commands us to repent, to hear the Son, and to believe that for the sake of the Son of God we have been received [by God]. And we must cling to Paul's dictum [Rom. 5:20], "Grace abounds over sin."

In keeping with these commands we must determine also to obey them, because when we do, it is certain that we have not committed the unforgivable sin.

A second passage is also cited from the Epistle to the Hebrews [10:26 ff.], "If we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins but a fearful expectation of judgment." If we are willing to judge critically about this passage, it does not deny that those who have fallen can rise again, but it does make a direct comparison in this statement between the benefit of Christ and the punishments [of God]. These two points are extreme and immediate: he who keeps the benefit of Christ shall be saved; he who does not retain it is headed for destruction. Here the passage does not deny that the fallen can come back to the benefit of Christ, but it excludes other victims and new sacrifices. Under the law there were frequent expiations for unclean acts, and the Pharisees taught that these merited the remission of sins. Thus, afterwards in the church many devised satisfactions and masses, and not only did they think up false worship forms but this erring persuasion also fostered security and self-indulgence regarding the expiation through such sacrifices. The Epistle to the Hebrews strongly attacks these notions. It certainly wishes that the benefit of Christ be retained, as it later says that God does not will that the blood of Christ be trodden under foot or shame be heaped upon the Spirit of grace [cf. v. 29]. These serious warnings urge us to beware that we do not lose the benefit of Christ, nor, on the other hand, do they forbid those who have fallen to return to Christ. This is the simple and appropriate meaning.

Contrition

Although no created being can fully understand the enormity of God's wrath against sin or have any realization of the wrath of God, as it says in Deut. 4[:24], "God is a consuming fire," yet God wills that in His church His wrath against sin be in some way recognized, and He wills that sin not be disregarded, and He does will that our hearts not be made of iron and without remorse, as it is said of the ungodly in Eph. 4[:18 ff.]. Therefore, in the church there was always at the beginning of a sermon the message: Repent. Thus Christ begins this way, and before Him the Baptist. Paul says the same [Rom. 1:18], "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven upon all." The prophets began in the same way. Is. 1[:4], "Alas, sinful nation." Even in paradise after the fall, the first sermon was to convict them of sin and show the wrath of God.

Ultimately all the calamities of the human race—death, sickness, poverty, hunger, murders, wars, destructions, and the countless disasters—are in truth warnings regarding the wrath of God against sin, as Ps. 39[:11] [says], "You correct man because of his iniquity."

Finally, the greatest of all testimonies to the wrath of God is that it was necessary for the Son to be made a sacrifice. It is a certainty that God wills that this wrath in some way be recognized by us and that we be motivated by His judgment and indignation. Thus it is necessary that there be contrition in us. And we call contrition, as the church uses the term, the fears of the conscience which recognize the wrath of God against our sins and which lament because of our sins. The word "repent" commands this contrition. See 2 Cor. 7[:9], "You sorrowed unto repentance." 1 Cor. 11[:31], "If we should judge ourselves, we would not be judged by the Lord," that is, but if we are troubled with true

sorrow, we have recognized the wrath of God. Joel 2[:13], "Rend your hearts and not your garments." Jer. 31[:19], "After you showed me, I smote upon my thigh, I was ashamed and confounded." Nah. 1[:6], "Who can stand before the face of His indignation? Who can resist the fury of His anger? His indignation is poured out like fire and the rocks are broken asunder by Him." Again, Is. 66[:2], "For whom shall I have regard except for him who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at My words?" Is. 1[:16], "Cease to do evil." Ps. 38[:4], "My iniquities have gone over my head." Again [Prov. 9:10], "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Over and over again the psalms enjoin fear and faith: [Ps. 147:11], "The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him and who hope in His mercy." To the same point pertain many statements of Paul [Rom. 6:6], "Our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed."

Some examples might be added, such as Adam and Eve, who were rebuked by God [cf. Gen. 3], and David who was rebuked by Nathan [cf. 2 Sam. 12]. They were greatly terrified. The sinful woman in Luke 7[:38] laments, and in Luke 22[:62] Peter weeps bitter tears. These and similar testimonies show that some contrition is necessary, which indeed ought to increase, so that we recognize not only outward sins but our inner uncleanness, namely, our doubting about God, our self-confidence, our pride or arrogance, our looking down on others, our hatred, our greed, our lust after wicked love, and other evil inclinations.

There is no repentance in hypocrites who are not affected by any feeling of sorrow or remorse, whom Jeremiah describes [6:15], "They do not know how to blush." And Paul says to the Ephesians that they lack sorrow [cf. 2 Cor. 12:21].

Moreover, in order that we may banish this carnal security from our mind, we must often call to mind the many statements which deal with contrition, the wrath of God, punishments both present and eternal, the examples of punishments, the calamities which befall ourselves and others, and above all the death of the Son of God for us, in order that we may recognize our miserable condition and learn to fear the wrath of God. It belongs to the ministry of the church, which Christ has instituted as a necessary function, that it condemn sins, as Paul clearly asserts [Rom. 1:18], "Now is revealed from heaven the wrath of God upon all ungodliness." And the voice of the Law, the moral law, as they call it, must be used for this part of the ministry. For this Law is the eternal and immutable sentence of God which declares His wrath against sin. For although God does receive the man who flees to Christ for refuge, yet He does not approve his sin. Therefore, Paul says [Rom. 3:20], "Through the Law is the knowledge of sin" and in the church this has always been proclaimed from the very beginning right after the fall, as is evident in Genesis 4, and forever after.

And absolutely false, absurd, and pernicious is the notion that depicts the Law as nothing and that it should not be preached. For it was preached through the patriarchs and then revealed with a terrifying voice on Sinai, and vigorously repeated through the prophets, Christ, and the apostles, in order that we might know that it is the eternal and immutable sentence of God declaring His wrath against sin. Likewise we should understand that all men have been condemned by this sentence of God under this corruption of our nature and are thus under the Law, as Paul says [cf. Rom. 3:9], "We have already charged that they are all under sin," that is, condemned and guilty before God. Just as the divine mind always remains, so the Law must always remain. And the knowledge of this Law remains in our consciences and is explained by the voice of God, of the patriarchs, the prophets, Christ, and the apostles. Thus Christ over and over again inculcates the Law, as in Matthew 5, and He even adds an explanation that we must know that we are accused by the Law not only because of outward sins, but also because of inner vices, blindness, unjust hatred, the flames of lust, and other things. Thus God wills that in the church the voice of this Law always shall be proclaimed, which instructs us regarding the obedience of the heart.

We must also utilize the voice of the Gospel, which accuses in this world our contempt for the wrath of God and His mercy which we can see in the offering of His Son. Thus Christ says [cf. John 16:8 ff.], "The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin because they did not believe in Me." Now we must understand how widely this preaching reaches which accuses and condemns sin. The whole human race is included. We are all filled with doubt and carnal security; we are negligent and misled in our prayer life; we are contaminated by corrupt desires; we care very little for the wrath of God; we abuse His blessings; we are all ungrateful to the Son of God. Therefore we should not be surprised that the whole world is burdened down with deadly punishments which are signs of the wrath of God. But we should consider, as Paul says, that "We are all under sin, and the whole world is guilty before God" [cf. Rom. 3:9,19], and each person must condemn his own sins and deplore them.

We must contemplate these things often and deeply, for that which is said, "The Spirit convicts the world," takes place through the Word which shows the wrath of God, and in this meditation on His Word the Holy Spirit is efficacious. And in 2 Tim. 2[:25] Paul clearly commands that those who are "opponents should be instructed and corrected, for perhaps God will give to them repentance." And in Jer.[31:19],"After you showed me, . . . I was confused and confounded." [1 Sam. 2:6], "The Lord puts to death and He restores to life." These things take place through the Word of God, as it is said in Heb. 4[:12], "The Word of God is living and efficacious and sharper than a sword." Therefore in those who neglect and despise the Word

of God the Holy Spirit is not working efficaciously, but rather their fierce resistance is increased. As it is said in Gen. [6:3], "My Spirit will not always be carrying on His work of judgment in man," which is to say that after they have undertaken to despise the Word, the Spirit ceases to judge, and so also the knowledge of sin ceases and prayer ceases.

Faith

But to contrition (that is, to the terrors of conscience) it is necessary to add consolation, namely, faith, which establishes for us that our sins are forgiven for the sake of the Son of God, and by the knowledge of this great mercy He guides us back so that we are not burdened down under despair and do not fall into eternal destruction. For if faith is not added, contrition only becomes eternal death. There is, therefore, a second part of faith, which is not only a matter of knowing the historical facts or the law, but there is a confidence or trust by which each person believes that his sins have truly been forgiven him by God for the sake of Christ, freely, that is, not on account of our own worthiness or merits.

Concerning this second part, that is, the faith which receives the remission of sins, the books of the monks are silent. But we should understand that this is the chief and proper voice of the Gospel, and this doctrine concerning faith is absolutely necessary for the church, and at the same time when we speak of repentance this teaching must be embraced.

At this point many argue that there is a difference between the contrition of Peter and Judas, and between David and Saul. And there are intricate disputations about the love of righteousness and the fear of punishment. But this distinction is plain and obvious. To the contrition of Judas no faith was added, and therefore he was burdened with terrors and rushed to his eternal destruction. On the contrary, faith was added to the contrition of Peter. Therefore he regained his life from out of his sorrows. And when we are guided by faith, then comes the knowledge of the goodness of God, and we are not only tormented by the fear of punishments but by a purer sorrow over the fact that we have offended God to whom we owe obedience and gratitude. But there is no need to explore these subtleties and emotions, for God wills that we fear His wrath and that it be seen in the light of His punishments. But faith is also added so that we do not run away from God, but rather return to Him and seek to be received and understand that it is the eternal and immutable will of God that He wants to receive those who have been terrified, who believe that they have been forgiven for the sake of the mediator. He commands us to believe this with certainty and as an established fact.

This faith makes a clear distinction between servile and filial fear. Servile fear is a dread without faith and it actually runs away from God; but filial fear is a dread to which faith has been added, which steers between these two kinds of dread and comforts the heart and approaches God, prays for and receives remission. These descriptions are plain and can be understood in our struggles. Contrition without faith is a horrible anxiety and sorrow of the mind which flees God, as in the case of Saul and Judas, and thus it is not a good work. But contrition with faith is a dread and sorrow of the mind which does not flee God, but recognizes that the wrath of God is just and it truly laments over its neglect or despising of God, and it also comes to God and seeks forgiveness. This kind of sorrow is a good work and a sacrifice, as the Psalm [51:17] says, "The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."

And it is still necessary to attack and reject the opinion which imagines that men merit remission because of their contrition or that remission is given because of the worthiness of our contrition. But we must retain the voice of the Gospel which proclaims that sins are freely forgiven for the sake of the Son of God. We must keep this above all, that to Christ must be attributed the honor which is due Him, and that our terrified minds must cling to this certain consolation, for they would be driven to despair if they were compelled to believe that they did not have the remission of sins unless their sorrow were worthy and sufficient. This simple statement removes entire labyrinths of arguments.

Therefore we must make the determination that some degree of contrition is necessary, along with true fears and terrors, but yet the remission of sins is not given to us because of any contrition or worthiness of ours but only for the sake of the Son of God, who in keeping with the marvelous counsel of God was made the victim, the mediator, and the intercessor.

And in order that we may keep in mind the doctrine of contrition we should set forth these main points for our consideration:

The Law of God
The wrath of God
Eternal punishments
Death
Present calamities, public and individual
The loss of His gifts
Poverty
Sickness
A bad reputation
Bad advice
Unsuccessful enterprises
Mistakes and anger
Problems with children
The tyranny of the devil, which forces us into many sins and even greater miseries
Inward punishments, namely, that sins are punished by sins, by blindness and the rages which follow such things.
Offenses

Public discord
Wars

We should also consider the benefits of God in this area in order that we may accuse and condemn our own ingratitude:

Creation
The revelation of God
The sending of His Son
The giving of the Word and the Gospel
The giving of the Holy Spirit
The promise of eternal life
The feeding and protection of our body and soul
The repulse of the devil
The showing of the sacred letters and of the true doctrine
Divine governance in morals and counsels
Good advice
Successful endeavors and fairness in judgment
Happy relationships with our children
Good examples and freedom from offense
A good name
Public concord
Peace and good government
The salutary condition of the church

We should remember the examples of Saul and David who possessed the benefits I have recounted before they fell, and after their fall they were deprived of these great blessings and felt the punishments I have mentioned. And Saul perished under the burden of physical punishments and offenses during his entire life. We should consider from the example of Adam and Eve what great punishments one lapse can bring, likewise in the adultery of David and the insanity of Solomon, on account of whose idols the kingdom of Israel was later overturned. And this overturning produced immeasurable evils, the division of their religion and its dissipation, and civil wars. When we consider these things we should not take our own lapses lightly or consider that small sins pertain to only a few people; and we should become much more careful in governing our morals.

It is more useful to weigh these matters carefully than to consider them as mere nonsense, as is done, for example, by asking whether it is fair to punish a finite action with eternal punishment. Let us avoid such frivilous questions and keep in mind that in sin there is contempt for the infinite Good. This contempt is also a violation of the infinite Good and is worthy of infinite punishment.

Now, after we have spoken about contrition, we need to explain the second part of this subject. For the ministry in the church does not only convict of sin, but it also proclaims the remission of sins to those who are terrified and who believe in Christ. Therefore, terrified minds must determine with certainty that they do indeed receive the remission of sins freely and by faith for the sake of Christ. Nor should faith be understood only as historical knowledge, but it must keep in mind the article in the Creed, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." It is not enough to believe in a general way that God forgives some people, as the devil also believes. For it is well known that in the church there is reconciliation, but as individuals we must determine that we ourselves have been forgiven, that we are received by God. By this special faith, so to speak, each person must apply to himself the benefit of Christ. This seems ridiculous to human judgment that we must determine about so great a thing, that is to say, that we are pleasing to God. But we must learn that God has in such a way revealed Himself that He has revealed this will of His to us; and His promises have been so given, His Son so sent, and the Gospel so spread throughout the world, that this statement has revealed what no creature can discover. Divine reconciliation is an immeasurable good, and therefore we assent to it only with difficulty. But let us arouse ourselves to believe the Gospel and understand that in this life we must be tied to the Word of God, in the same way that a fetus in the womb of its mother remains tied to her belly or the interior of her womb, nor must we break away from this umbilical cord, namely, the Gospel which instructs us about the will of God. But afterwards, when we have come out of the womb into eternal life and light, then we will perceive face to face the will of God and His admirable wisdom.

Testimonies

Acts 10[:43], "To Him all the prophets give testimony, that through His name all who believe in Him receive remission of sins." This is a clear and plain statement in which Peter bears witness that he is giving a summary of the prophetic Scripture, and he is opposing this statement to the popular opinion which the people had regarding the Messiah. He affirms that Jesus has been sent by the Father that He might be made a victim for sins and that for His sake the remission of sins is given to those who believe that for His sake they have been received [by God]. And because this dictum cites all the prophets, we should understand that here is the true consensus of the universal, or catholic, church.

Rom. 5[:1], "Therefore having been justified by faith we have peace with God," that is, we have it as a certainty that God is favorable toward us, that we have been received into grace and delivered from His anger and eternal punishments.

But the adversaries play games with these passages. They confess that faith, that is, the profession of the historical facts, is necessary (the same kind of faith that the devil has) but they deny that sins are forgiven freely, and they command us to doubt that they really are remitted. These errors have already been refuted above under the locus on justification, and for this reason I shall at this point only give a brief instruction to the reader. For it is useful in our daily invocation to understand these struggles of faith. No one is ig-

norant of the fact that God is merciful; nor do men question whether God will remit the sins of some. But they think that sins are remitted to the worthy but not to the unworthy, and as individuals we do discern a great deal of unworthiness in ourselves. Then a second question exhausts our minds regarding the matter of particularity. Thus it is necessary for us to keep in mind the testimonies of [Scripture] which give us assurance so that we may know these two things, namely, that the promise is both universal and gracious. Romans 3 contains testimonies to both of these points. Regarding the universal promise it says [a variant reading of v. 22], "The righteousness of God . . . is to all and upon all who believe." Then he adds [vv. 24 ff.], "We are justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God has put forward as a propitiation through faith in His blood." Thus we must cling to this alone and oppose all the strenuous efforts about our worthiness. For the voice of the Law always clamors against us to deter us so that we do not determine as an established fact that we are received on the grounds that we are unworthy. In opposition to this message we must understand that the Gospel has been revealed from the bosom of the Father, which testifies that we are received for the sake of the Son, the mediator, and not on account of our own worthiness.

We must remember this daily in our prayers and understand that contrition and other virtues are not being excluded from being present. For repentance certainly is necessary, but the cause of our forgiveness of sins must not be attributed to our worthiness but to Christ. Therefore we must determine that the remission of sins does not depend upon the worthiness of our contrition or our works, but only on our confidence in the benefit of Christ, as it says in Eph. 2[:8], "By grace are you saved . . . it is the gift of God, not of yourselves."

Rom. 4[:16] deals with the principal argument which arises out of the causes and power of the promise, "Therefore it is from faith, freely, that the promise might be sure," that is, if reconciliation depended on the worthiness of our contrition or our works, since none of us satisfies the Law the promise of reconciliation would also become unsure and empty. This syllogism is set up by Paul:

The promise of reconciliation must be sure;

A promise which depends on the condition of the Law is unsure;

Therefore, the promise of reconciliation does not depend on the condition of the Law.

Paul proves the minor premise when he says [Rom. 4:15], "The Law works wrath," it always accuses (*semper accusat*). Now consider the sum and substance of Paul's argument. He is contending that Christ is the victim or the sacrifice for our sins, in order that by this antithesis he may establish the single fact that our works are not the merit for the remission of sins. Other testimonies may be taken from the locus on justification, where we have spoken also about the word "faith," which certainly can be much more clearly understood in this present argument, where the godly mind experiences that it is at rest in the mercy [of God] which has been promised for the sake of Christ; and the godly mind also understands that this mercy is obtained through faith (*fide*), that is, through trust (*fiducia*). This faith is not only a belief of the historical facts, but it looks to this article [of the Creed], "I believe in the remission of sins," and it clings to the promise, as is clearly said in Rom. 4[:16]. And this faith which assents to the promise is confidence in His mercy.

Finally, in these testimonies we must compare the statements of the apostles and prophets in order that we may see the continuous consensus of the universal church from the beginning down to the present. Thus Paul cites from the Psalms numerous statements from time to time which support this concept. Ps. 32[:5], "I said I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and You forgave the iniquity of my sin." Ps. 143[:2], "In Your sight shall no living man be justified." Ps. 51[:4], "Against You only am I a sinner . . . that You may be justified in Your words." These statements and others like them testify that when we draw near to God we should not offer our own righteousness, nor can we put our own merits up in opposition to the judgment and wrath of God, but we must flee for refuge to Christ the mediator and truly understand that for His sake we are forgiven freely and received into grace.

Many writers have also omitted this part from faith because it seems absurd to human reason to affirm that God is favorably inclined toward you. We must get rid of this judgment of our reason and seek the will of God in His Gospel. When we read that forgiveness was announced to David by a special command of God, we marvel at this singular benefit, and each person thinks that it would also be freely credited to him if he were given such a word from heaven. But we need to know that this word already has been imparted to us. Forgiveness is just as surely given to you if you believe the Gospel as it was surely given to David and it is just as surely required of you that you believe the word of the Gospel which proclaims remission as it was required of David that he believe the word of Nathan.

Thus far I have spoken of contrition and faith. It is also necessary at the same time that the new obedience begin, as it says in Rom. 6[:12], "Let not sin reign in your mortal body." Rom. 8[:1], "There is now no condemnation to those who live in Christ Jesus." And John [the Baptist] says [Luke 3:8], "Bring forth the fruits worthy of repentance," that is, things which are in keeping with repentance. This new obedience is usually called good intention; but it is truly and without hypocrisy possible to determine both to will to obey God and to retain the righteousness of a good conscience. And in order that there may be this firmness of the will, we must be helped by the Holy Spirit, who is given when we sustain ourselves by faith, as it says in Gal. 3[:14],

"that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Again, Rom. 8[:15], "You have received the Spirit of the adoption of sons, by which we cry, 'Abba, father.' " For when by faith we assent to the promise, we acknowledge the mercy and the presence of God who looks out for us, cares for us, and receives us, and we begin to invoke Him in truth and to subject ourselves to Him, to fear and to obey Him.

Thus in Zechariah [12:10] these two concepts are very skillfully joined together, grace and invocation: "I shall pour out upon the house of David the Spirit of grace and of prayers." That is to say, we are first moved by the Holy Spirit so that we may recognize and consider it a certainty that we are received into grace. And the most important worship of God and the work of the church alone is the true invocation which comes from the recognition of grace. For the mind which does not know reconciliation flees from God and does not call upon Him. But those who have been received into grace draw near to Him and call upon Him, as it says in Rom. 5[:2], "Through Him we have access by faith." Eph. 3[:12], "Through whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith." And how the new obedience is pleasing to God when it is still far short of the perfection of the Law, and while other sins still remain in this life in those who have been reconciled—this we have discussed above.

Confession

It is worth the effort for those who are learned to see how varied is the use of the term "confession." Popularly the word "confession" is understood to mean the enumeration of individual sins, which takes place before the ministers of the church from whom absolution is sought; and perhaps in the beginning this custom of enumerating individual sins arose from those who made a public confession of their sins before the ministers or the church. For in olden times people were not received [at communion] unless they had confessed before the ministers that they knew their sins, sought forgiveness, and promised to amend their lives.

The word "confession" is used very commonly among the apostles and prophets, as in Matt. 3[:6], "They were being baptized in the Jordan, confessing their sins." Likewise, Neh. 9[:1 ff.], the sons of Israel came together for a fast and confessed their sins. Lev. 16[:21], Aaron confesses the iniquities of all the children of Israel. Here the public custom is described in which by the voice of the high priest the entire church confessed that it was guilty. In these passages "confession" not only refers to the secret acknowledgment of guilt before God, but also the public confession in a general way before God and the church on the part of those who confessed that they were guilty and were seeking pardon.

Therefore, it is apparent that this public and general confession was the practice of the ancients. But when David says [Ps. 32:5], "I said, I will confess my sins to the Lord," this confession refers to the secret acknowledgment of his guilt before God (which acknowledgment is contrition itself), joined with the prayer for pardon. James also uses the term "confession" when he speaks of reconciliation [5:16], "Confess your sins one to another"; that is, among those who had had dissensions, let each confess his faults and let them all return to mutual favor with one another. As Solomon says [Prov. 18:17],"The just man is his own first accuser, and then he investigates another," that is, God does not will that we shut our eyes to our own faults and sharply criticize others, but He wills that we first investigate our own conscience, confess our own faults, and mend our lives, as it says in Matt. 7[:5], "First take the beam out of your own eye."

Therefore, after we have observed the various uses of this word, then we can distinguish the ancient meanings from the later practice of enumeration.

Confession is twofold: one part is the public judgment, when those who are guilty of manifest crimes are accused before the church, and there we must openly confess that in regard to this manifest sin we have fallen and lament the fact that we have offended God and corrupted the church. Here it is necessary, since the crime is an open one, that the enumeration or recitation of the sins not be omitted. But the second part of confession is the private or secret confession. Here we say that an enumeration is not necessary, and although many people strongly contend that when this chain is loosened discipline will cease to exist, yet we must see to it in the second kind that the light of faith is not extinguished and that traps are not laid for our consciences. And yet we shall note shortly how the method of discipline is to be retained.

Now there are three reasons why it is necessary to assert the doctrine that the enumeration of sins is not necessary: First, because the monks have devised this enumeration as a form of worship and as deserving the remission of sins; second, they demand its retention, because satisfaction can be required as a penalty; and third, because in this way the conscience can be led into doubt and despair by this meticulous enumeration. These errors have to be attacked, for remission does not depend on the enumeration [of our sins] as a condition, and we must retain the proclamation of the Gospel of free pardon. Then, this raving about satisfaction must be even more put under attack. Finally, it is evident that this enumeration was a harsh torment for the godly, who, when they saw that they could not recollect all their sins, were never at peace and their faith was destroyed by their doubt. It was necessary for godly physicians to find a remedy for this evil.

Therefore, it is manifest that in the secret confession the enumeration of all or even a few sins had not been commanded by divine law because neither Christ nor the apostles had commanded it. Furthermore, an enumeration of all sins is impossible, according to the

statement [in Ps. 19:12], "Who can understand his errors?" For there are many sins of ignorance in the most important deliberations, as when Josiah began an unnecessary war; likewise in other matters, such as certain errors in doctrine, as in the case of those who spread stubble on top of true teachings and thus obscure them. Likewise, there are many sins of omission which we do not understand. Thus it is absurd to say that an enumeration of all sins is necessary, since it is impossible. Therefore these points should be carefully delineated so that the doctrine of free remission and faith is not obscured.

But on the other hand, because of private absolution, which must be retained in the churches, the custom of seeking absolution must also be retained. And there are many other useful aspects of this private conversation which should be kept, even though the enumeration is not used.

The first is that absolution should be sought.

The second is that the pastor should ask his hearers about their teaching. For to every pastor is given the command that he should look into the ideas of his hearers regarding doctrine and should learn whether they are progressing. He should correct and instruct the dilatory, and he should explain to the people what he believes.

The third is that before the uninstructed are admitted to the sacraments, they must be instructed in doctrine, and this conversation can be used in place of the catechism.

The fourth is that although the pastor must not force anyone to reveal secret facts, yet he can, in keeping with the age of the person and the kind of life they live, ask certain questions about their morals and give them useful instruction. For example, if he is listening to merchants, he can ask them what kind of contracts they are drawing up.

The fifth is that just as in Nehemiah [9:1 ff.] and Matthew [3:6] the statement is made, "They were confessing their sins" (that is, they were confessing in general that they were guilty, and they submitted themselves to God, and showed their sorrow), so in the request for absolution, even when the recitation of individual sins is omitted, yet it is necessary to show in a general way that we do confess that we are guilty, that we are submitting ourselves to God, that we are truly sorry that we have offended God, that we have dishonored the church, and that we have piled up public offenses. When this custom is retained in this way, prudently and reverently, it is beneficial for instruction.

The sixth is that of all the points we have mentioned this above all can move all thinking and prudent people. The custom of seeking absolution is a testimony to this article that those who have fallen are amending their lives and are received back by God, and then they must be received by the church. And it is useful that this testimony be kept alive in the church. For Peter of Alexandria refuted Meletius when he was explaining the delerium of the Cathari, who in keeping with the common custom in the church offered the examples of absolution. The minds of all are moved greatly by these rites which are carefully performed in the sight of all the people, and which have been confirmed not only in antiquity but were in use among the kind of church officers of whose piety and doctrine we approve with sure testimony. Thus, also at that time there was the useful practice of confirming the true statement of Peter, and for us the understanding of this continuous practice can be very beneficial. Furthermore, when Christ clearly says [Matt. 18:18], "Whatsoever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven," it is certain that a command is given to absolve. And although absolution or reception of the lapsed is understood to have taken place when they are again admitted to the congregation, this express absolution must still not be abolished.

Among the Gentiles, the doctrine of the remission of sins for the sake of the mediator, the Son of God, was entirely lost, but the doctrine of the Law is still retained. For the nature of man easily forgets the Gospel since it is a doctrine which is not innate in the mind of man, just as even the monks covered up the light of the Gospel of the free remission by their manufacturing of all kinds of crazy ideas about satisfaction and other things. Therefore now, if the custom of giving absolution were to be abolished, the clouds of darkness would descend again and the doctrine of receiving back those who had fallen would become even more obscure. Thus it is useful to retain this practice, since it has always existed in the church. And the godly should understand that in the retention of this custom they are not only serving their own need but that of ages to come.

I hope that this godly and useful practice will continue among many in order that they will treasure the custom of seeking absolution and be more eager to retain it. When you draw near to seek absolution, think of these three things: [First] the general confession (*confessio generalis*) has always existed in the church. By it the godly may show that they acknowledge their failures and that they confess that they are guilty of the wrath of God, and that you thus may also lament your guilt and you confess that you are guilty, as Daniel says [9:7], "To us belongs confusion." Then second, pray that to you may be applied the word of the Gospel by which the remission of sins is proclaimed to you. And console yourself with this word and strengthen your faith. Third, remember to retain this custom, in order that your posterity also may know that they have fallen and emend their lives, be received by God, and be taken back into His church.

And it is useful that the uneducated may develop some kind of enumeration established in keeping with the order of the Decalogue. This diligence is profitable. Just as the Catechism, it instructs those who recite it as to which actions and which failures are actually sins,

and what are the different degrees of sins, and what the difference is between forensic judgment and the judgment of the Gospel regarding sins. It also compels men to examine themselves and acknowledge their sins and failures of which many people in seeking absolution do not even think. Furthermore, how can contrition or sorrow exist without at least some degree of thinking about our failures, about the wrath of God, and about punishments both present and eternal?

Moreover, a great part of the people only understand as sins those outrageous crimes which are punished with public torments, but of false invocation and sins of the heart they know nothing. Therefore men must develop that habit of learning the Decalogue which, although in other situations is often explained and taught by our teachers, yet is best understood by the people when each person looks at his own life in that mirror and sees his own errors.

The Commandments

The First Commandment

I must think properly about God and determine with firm faith that He is the one God, the creator of all things, and that He will be the judge of all men, and that He has revealed Himself in the giving of His Word and the sending of His Son. I must with true fear obey Him and fear His wrath and judgment, with true faith call upon Him for the sake of His Son, and love Him and feel the movement of a grateful heart toward God.

I must experience the greatness of His mercy whereby He has revealed Himself to us, truly loves the human race, and truly wills that we be saved. I must be moved by the benefits of the Son whereby He suffered for us, gave the Gospel, promised the Holy Spirit to govern us, and promised us eternal life.

But all these things have less influence on my mind than they ought to have. I am not sufficiently fearful, I often doubt, and with a kind of perpetual doubt I coldly ask good things of God. I am cold in my prayers, and meanwhile I trust in things present and I ask protection for this life while neglecting the order God has established. I have often offended God, erring in a false invocation. I have called upon dead men. I have thought more of invoking a statue as God or someone holy rather than the other way around. Even now I also err. I do not think of the true God who has revealed Himself through His Son, nor do I think of His Son and His promise. Finally, I am not burning in my prayer, as I should be.

The Second Commandment

I must diligently learn the Gospel, celebrate it in my speech and adorn it by my example, and I acknowledge my negligence in this matter. Indeed, I often neglect the Gospel under the pretext of some private and personal lust. Often by my example and scandalous behavior I give occasion to others to teach the Gospel wrongly or do some other wrong thing. Sometimes I err in some teaching, and by this error I have corrupted the heavenly doctrine.

The Third Commandment

I often neglect public worship and ceremonies on festival days, even when not hindered by other [valid] reasons; and by my example I lead others astray. I do not thank God for His establishment of the ministry, for His preservation of the church, for His preservation of the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures. I do not support the church in its prayers for the government in the gatherings of the congregation; I am not sufficiently concerned with our common miseries whereby churches and government are overthrown by ignorance, discord, and wars, and the souls and bodies of many perish; and I myself do not support the ministry of the church with my efforts; I do not reverence, as I should, godly ministers. Sometimes I curse them and by my example I strengthen contempt and hatred toward them. I do not pay them what I ought. I often spend holidays in the wrong way on shameful things, and I provoke God against many people.

The Fourth Commandment

I am negligent in my calling, in zeal, in governing my family. I am ungrateful to God for the benefits of an orderly government. Sometimes I am unjustly angry at our rulers and I curse them; I do not give them the respect I owe them from my heart. Sometimes I stir up opposition to the laws and I violate the political order with offensive living to the detriment of others, and by my foolish tumults I hinder other necessary public business. I am not intent on keeping myself in my own station or concerned that I not make an uproar against the common harmony of good government. I am greedy and serve my own interests far more than the public interest, or I seize opportunities to stir up trouble.

The Fifth Commandment

I often blaze with unjust indignation and desire for revenge. I pile up curses which rise out of the desire to inflict harm. I am moved by jealousy. I regret the power of another person or that his authority increases, and I desire to put him down. I am proud. I look down on my peers and I want for myself superiority over them. I am suspicious, and sometimes I develop unjust hatreds because of false suspicions. I sow and strengthen discord. I often spread rumors and words which hurt people and arouse hatred. I have my share of spite and malevolence. I delight in disparaging people. Sometimes in a critical manner I misconstrue the words and actions of others; I am not at all anxious to remove offenses and reconcile opposing wills. I allow hatred to increase by my private spite or for some other private reason I curse those who are absent. And sometimes I pour insults on those who are present. I hinder

my own prayers and stir up hatred and dissent among others.

The Sixth Commandment

I have wandering desires and many flaming lusts; I indulge my eyes and my thoughts with shameful things, and my body is made impure. I add to these evils by intemperance and drunkenness. I hinder godly thoughts and prayers by these burning lusts and desires and disgusting drunkenness, and I bring with me the savagery of wild beasts. I increase by my impurity the wrath of God against myself, my family, and society.

The Seventh Commandment

I enjoy the generosity of my parents or the support of the public dole, and I do not save it. I defraud my brothers or other poor people. I am crooked in my business dealings. I am not anxious for the sake of God to practice fair-play financially. I pay my debts with great reluctance. I lay traps to get money by unjust means. I borrow money under false pretenses and I have no concern to repay it. I keep things which belong to others. I am not trustworthy and diligent in carrying out the work which I have been directed to do. I sell inferior merchandise, and I ruin things which I have borrowed.

The Eighth Commandment

I am not open and truthful, as God requires, in my words and actions. I mix double-talk with my counsels and business dealings or doctrine. Sometimes I support false things out of hatred, anger, or sinful stubbornness, or out of adulation for someone or out of fear. In my morals there is hypocrisy, a pretense of virtue or a false pride.

Finally, I acknowledge that I am wretched in my blindness and false security, that I am terribly unmindful of the wrath of God, and that in many ways have strayed from His precepts and have harmed others in many offensive ways. I have brought punishments upon myself and others so that I cannot even comprehend the greatness and number of my sins and failures. But I must confess that I deserve present and eternal punishments, and with true sorrow I cry out [Ps. 51:4], "Against You only have I sinned, before You I have done evil, that You may be justified." I truly lament that God has been offended by me and that the church and the rest of the human race have been harmed and corrupted by me. I flee for refuge to the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, the propitiator, and for His sake I pray that God the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the good, wise judge and defender may turn away His wrath from me and forgive me my sins for the sake of His Son and receive me with His immeasurable mercy, as it says [Ezek. 33:11], "As I live, I do not wish the death of the sinner, but that he may be turned and live." And I promise that I will fight against my sin and will do nothing against my conscience, and I pray God that He would rule me by His Holy Spirit; and from you as from the minister of Christ I implore that you would proclaim the word of the Gospel, which I believe, and at the same time to the church I promise that I will amend my conduct and contend against offenses.

The common people should be made accustomed to this general kind of confession, so that they may know what they are doing when they seek absolution and may be able to examine themselves, recognize that they have great and many failures, learn the different levels of sins, and learn from the Decalogue itself to understand seriously the sins which lie hidden within them, so that they may contend against their iniquities and begin to improve themselves.

Finally, how can sorrow exist in the mind if there is no recognition of our miserable condition? Not in vain did Christ say [John 16:8], "The Holy Spirit will convict . . . of sin." And this takes place through the knowledge of the Word, of the wrath of God, and of our own uncleanness. Therefore, in order that the Holy Spirit may convict you and create in you true terrors of conscience and correct your carnal security and pride, so that you may become terrified and submit yourself to God and humble yourself beneath other men, let each person take a look at the Word of God and his own ragings, so that you do not come seeking absolution filled with self-confidence and without grieving, as the Pharisee did in Luke 18[:11] who said, "I am not as other men." And it is useful to set forth this kind of general confession in sermons and catechism instruction.

Now I want to return to the discussion of the enumeration of individual sins which some people contend is necessary under two pretexts:

Absolution cannot take place without thinking about these things.

Absolution must be sought here.

Therefore, thinking about these things is necessary.

I reply to the major premise. There is a difference between judgment and the ministration of the Gospel. In judgment there must be thinking about these things; but the ministration of the Gospel is a definite command to receive a benefit, namely, the announcement of the remission of sins, whether we are aware of them or not. For many sins are forgiven which the person who is absolved neither remembers nor understands, and the word of absolution must be received by faith. Here we must not debate whether the form of judgment has been sufficiently preserved, for faith does not rely in the work of the priest, but it looks to Christ the propitiator, knows that for His sake the wrath of God has been turned away from us, and understands that the will of God is revealed and proclaimed to us in the word of the Gospel.

David would have died in shame and sorrow when he was accused by Nathan if he had not afterwards also heard the absolution [2 Sam. 12:13], "The Lord has taken away your sin." When he heard this

divine word, he again began to be at peace, to come back to life, and to call upon God. Moreover, a person may now have the idea "If God would indicate to me by such a remarkable message, then it would also be well with me." This notion must be corrected by a consideration of the word of the Gospel or absolution, for the word of the Gospel or absolution does proclaim this very thing to you and to any one of us, because this message was spoken to David regarding the remission of sins, and you must believe the Gospel as it is proclaimed through ministers today no less than it was necessary in those days for David to believe it.

Therefore, this is a true and firm reply to the argument that absolution must not take place without this thinking about these things [enumeration]. This is true in the case of judgment, but not in the performance of the ministration of the Gospel by which the benefit is given to us. And the power of this ministration is seen when men are instructed regarding the distinction between judgment and the ministration of the Gospel, for this ministration pertains to our conscience and is a testimony of divine absolution. But judgment is an entirely different matter and it pertains to open sins. No one should be either excommunicated or received back without thinking about these things, but in that case the thinking is valid not with regard to conscience but with reference to external morals, and this absolution is valid before the church, even if he who is absolved only pretends to be repentant.

And that the Gospel can be applied publicly to many and privately to individuals, this statement is a faithful witness [John 20:23], "Whosoever sins you remit they are remitted to them;" and again [Matt. 18:21], "How many times shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him?" For this passage is speaking about the forgiveness which God approves.

But some object that men cannot remit sins, and this is true, but they can and must proclaim the Word of God in which God bears witness that He does forgive sins. For God remits sins through the ministration of the Gospel and the sacraments. And it is obvious that these people are not hearing what the word of the Gospel or the administration of it is when they do not want the announcement of forgiveness to be made expressly. But God sent His Son to reveal from the bosom of the Father His secret will concerning the remission of sins, and He commanded that this be proclaimed in the churches. And the sacraments are applications of this remission, that is, they testify that the benefits of the Gospel apply to individuals. "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," that is, by the command of God I assert that you are now received by the true God who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; by His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered for you; and by the Holy Spirit, who is given into the hearts of the reconciled, in order that He may rule over them and begin eternal life in them. Therefore, I testify that your sins are forgiven and you have become an heir of eternal life.

Certain people are using a new insight to defend the rule of enumeration thus: The unbroken consensus of the church is looked upon as a dogma of the Holy Spirit; there has always been the practice of enumeration in the church; therefore it is necessary to retain the practice.

I reply to the minor premise: it was the practice to recite manifest sins and deplore them, but the ancient church did not mandate the secret recitation by individuals, as Chrysostom clearly says in his commentary on Psalm [51], "If it embarrasses a person to speak his sins, let him speak them daily in his heart; I do not say that you must confess publicly what you want to keep to yourself so that you might reproach yourself; speak to God who cleanses your sins." Similar statements might be quoted from others which can be used to oppose those who allege that it is the unbroken consensus, in order that they might defend the harshness of this very superstitious regulation (*canon*). Furthermore, it is the duty of the godly pastor to consider all of this and to warn of the dangers to consciences and about corruptions in doctrine, and yet at the same time see how discipline and instruction may be preserved in a godly manner.

Satisfaction

There was an ancient practice in the church that those who had fallen (*lapsi*), those who had defected from the Gospel because of fear of punishments and had become polluted because of bloody sacrifices or manifest lusts, were not taken back until they had been previously chastised. And this custom was observed from the very beginning both for the sake of example in order that others might be instructed more thoroughly to control their moral actions, but also that their intentions might be examined as to whether they were returning to the church with serious purposes. The entire matter was a civil or external ritual which did not pertain to conscience or the remission of sins before God. But later on, as it turned out, many superstitious notions were added, from which finally labyrinthine questions arose. Therefore, it is necessary that the churches be instructed regarding this aspect of the matter, especially since in the refutation of errors many very serious matters need to be explained at the same time. We need to explain the doctrine of the remission of sins, show the distinction between the remission of guilt and the remission of temporal penalties, and describe the temporal penalties in which God wills that His wrath against sins be observed (as in the punishment of David, Manasseh, and others which show the distinction between true and fabricated worship). It is necessary to include all of these important points.

Now, in order that I may speak about the external rite of these chastenings or chastisements from the very

beginning [of the practice], I believe we must trace the matter back to the time of the patriarchs. For vestiges remain even among the Greeks, where a person who had unjustly shed blood or committed incest was excommunicated, that is, he was excluded from the common association of his fellow men, and certain signs were attached to his clothes which asserted that he was a man who was guilty and polluted who must be avoided, and no one should break bread with him as long as he was wearing these signs of his guilt. There were certain imprecations and ominous portents or warnings which were spoken against those who were polluted. Thus Phoenix, in Homer, tells that warnings were spoken against him because of the shameful marriage of his father [Iliad 9.168 ff.]. And Orestes wandered about Greece, keeping away from association with other people and wearing a badge of his guilt; and from time to time other examples are found, such as Pelius, Antilochus, and Adrastus, who came to Croesus wearing a badge of guilt. It is obvious that these examples have been taken from the ancient patriarchs who observed these rituals for the sake of discipline, in order that men might contemplate the enormity of the wrath of God against those who have become polluted, and that they might ever more stay away from such crimes.

The replica of this ancient custom was also preserved in the church in the practice of excommunication. The lapsed were excluded from common association with people and the wrath of God was pronounced upon them. Nor was this pronouncement something empty, but the punishments of God followed. When those who had fallen sought to be received back, sometimes they were investigated for days before being absolved. They stood outside the place of the Lord's Supper with the badges of their guilt, that is, imploring and shamed and pleading for absolution. When this was announced to them, they were again admitted to the Lord's Supper and received back into the fellowship of the congregation.

We in no way disapprove of this ritual of public chastisement and examination. Indeed we would hope that it be observed without any false notions, without superstition and without intolerable burdens attached to it; and it would be an example of discipline, as when Paul praises the church at Corinth in 2 Cor. 7 because it had with great seriousness given a censure to the incestuous man and excluded him [cf. 2 Cor. 2:5 ff.]. (But afterwards he received the declaration of his repentance.) [2 Cor. 7:11]: "What great indignation, zeal, and punishment your grief created," that is, what a penalty, namely, the excommunication of a person who was corrupted by a shameful relationship with his stepmother.

But after the time of the apostles the canons became corrupted by increasing superstitions, and sometimes years of fastings were imposed under the false persuasion that these works merited the remission of sins and were a payment for sins. And thus they came to be called satisfactions. Thus was obscured the light of the Gospel regarding faith which receives the remission of sins for the sake of Christ. Finally these regulations [*canones*] became intolerable, and they were forgotten and neglected. The name remained, as did the vestiges, which the monks debate and spawn many corruptions of the Gospel, about which I shall speak shortly.

But first we must understand that the term "satisfactions" in this context is not understood in the sense of civil satisfactions, as when a person who has defrauded others must compensate for the theft, or when a person has injured someone by reviling him or inflicting improper physical violence on him and he must make satisfaction for the injury and withdraw his slanders and undergo punishment in proportion to the physical harm he has done. These are works which must be performed and pertain to the matter of contrition, according to the statement [Is. 1:16], "Cease doing wrong." He who runs off with and keeps the wife of another man does not have contrition as long as he keeps her. Thus these things are civil satisfactions involving material things and the restoration of a good reputation, works which must be done under the mandate of the Law of God. They are necessary for true contrition and good intention and good conscience.

But the monks here define satisfactions as works which we do not owe, and by them they want to deliver us from the punishments of purgatory and certainly from other temporal punishments. Thus they teach that God, since He is merciful, does remit guilt, but since He is righteous and an avenger, He changes eternal punishment into temporary punishment in purgatory. They go on to add that a part of the punishments is remitted by the power of the keys and a part must be paid for by satisfactions. This is the substance of their idea. They are correct when they admit that guilt is not remitted because of a satisfaction, but later on they hallucinate regarding the payment for eternal punishment. For their error lies in the fact that they believe eternal punishments are remitted for the sake of our payment. It is even more absurd when they figure that there is a remission of works which we do not owe, of which it is written [Matt. 15:9], "In vain do they worship Me by the commandments of men."

Therefore we must conclude that the remission of guilt and eternal death are joined together. For it is one and the same benefit given us freely by Christ, both to take away guilt and to assuage the wrath of God, nor is eternal death anything else than believing that the frightful and indescribable wrath of God remains over us, as John says [3:36], " . . . the wrath of God remains upon him." Thus we need to understand that guilt and eternal death are both taken away at the same time for the sake of Christ, and not for the sake of or because of any compensation on our part. Therefore, Paul says [1 Cor. 15:56 ff.], "The sting of death

is sin . . . but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." And Rom. 6[:23], "The gift of God is life eternal through Jesus Christ." And Hos. 13[:14], "O death, I will be your death; O grave, I will be your plagues."[1] Therefore we must believe that by faith for the sake of Christ, freely, we have peace with God. The benefits of Christ are these: to take away guilt and eternal death, that is, to assuage the enormous wrath of God. Therefore, whoever attributes the remission of eternal death to our own endeavors brings shame on Christ.

Second, although we must not confuse the remission of guilt and the remission of eternal death, yet it is necessary to distinguish between the remission of guilt and the remission of the temporal punishments of this life. Indeed, as often as we consider repentance, we also must consider the greatness of the wrath of God even in the temporal punishments of this life. For although there are many reasons why the church is under the cross, yet the principal cause is the sin which clings to our flesh. The entire human race is pressed down under great calamities and death, but this is especially so with the church.

God wills that in the church His wrath against sin (which the world holds in contempt) be understood. Therefore, He loads onto the church even heavier burdens in order that we might recognize that we are bearing our punishments with us, that we are guilty of truly angering God with our sin, but that we are received [by Him] for the sake of His Son. Adam knew he was received into grace because the Son of God had interceded for the human race, and this marvelous decree concerning the redemption of the human race had been made in the counsel of the eternal Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Yet he [Adam] was subject to physical penalties so that he might recognize his fall. And the most tragic chastisements followed in which Adam saw that the signs of his guilt really surrounded him. One example of this was the terrible sorrow he went through because of the crime of Cain and the murder of Abel, and many similar things which the wretched parents saw during those long years.

Furthermore, in addition to common troubles, the saints are punished with individual penalties because of some of their personal sins. Because of his adultery, David for a long time endured terrible troubles. First his daughter was raped, then the violent murder of his son followed. Then a sedition was stirred up against him by his son, his wives were molested, his citizens killed, his father was beaten in battle, and the defeat of David's kingdom was of less sorrow to him than his great loss of the glory of the power and favor of God. He realized that he had truly been excommunicated and that he had become surrounded with these great miseries and sorrows as signs of his guilt, not at the hands of man but of God, in order that he might recognize that God was truly angry at his sin, that he must submit himself to God and not arrogate to himself praise for his own righteousness or elevate himself above other sinners, and that others should be instructed by his example.

Thus, by particular punishments Samson also was punished, along with Solomon, Uzziah, who was smitten with leprosy [cf. 2 Chron. 26:19 ff.], Josiah, Nebuchadnezzar, and countless other saints who daily endured punishments of this kind. And I am not speaking of ungodly people or those who have been cast out whose enormous sins God has punished in this life with the normal signs of His punishments, since He is the guardian of society and civil righteous—here I am thinking of such people as Cataline, Nero and ordinary day by day thieves. But I am speaking about the church, about the saints. Many of them in all ages have fallen and been punished with penalties peculiar to them in keeping with the statement in Ps. 89[:32], "I will visit their transgressions with the rod." And again [1 Peter 4:17], "Judgment begins at the house of God."

Third, we need to understand that although those who have been converted endure temporal punishments, yet these punishments in no way pertain to the power of the keys. They are neither imposed by or remitted by the power of the keys, with the result that this matter itself demonstrates that neither death, nor diseases, nor wars can be imposed or removed by the ministers of the Gospel. But by these struggles God allows us, in a sense, to be surrounded by signs of our guilt, since He does indeed punish particular sins in order that He may instruct us—both ourselves and others—regarding His judgment against sin. And since these punishments are examples for many people, many by these calamities are shown to be burdened down as in a public spectacle. For David's expulsion—what a sad public spectacle it was!

What a terrible tragedy was the destruction of the Emperor Maurice! When Phocas dragged him back from his flight and ordered him with his wife and daughters and sons to be brought before him, he first commanded his daughters to be put to death while their father and their most honorable mother watched the sight, and then his adolescent son [was killed]. But the youngest child, who was still very young, was not present but was with his nurse, and when [Phocas] ordered him brought forward, the husband of the nurse did not bring this child but his own son, so great was his faith in his friend. But when Maurice saw the child he interrupted Phocas and told him this was not the right child and that he did not want this terrible thing to befall his friend. And therefore the son of Maurice was brought forward and put to death. And afterwards the poor, miserable mother was cut to pieces. In this unspeakable calamity no impious word was heard from Maurice, but he stood as a spectator to these incredible atrocities and made confession of his own guilt, saying, "You are

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[1] Melanchthon follows the Hebrew Masoretic text. Paul in 1 Cor. 15:55 follows the LXX and Vulgate, "Death, where . . . "

righteous, O Lord, and your judgment is upright." Finally he himself was put to death. Maurice was endowed with many other virtues and he was a promoter of the Christian religion. But when he became very angry, he did some very harsh things. Therefore, he fell into these punishments, and he had previously repented of these wrongs when he was admonished about them. But God by means of this calamity even added to his repentance, and willed to admonish others by His act of judgment. Thus it is sufficient that we understand that these punishments in no way have pertained to the power of the keys.

Fourth, these punishments are not substitutes for purgatory or eternal death. Indeed the calamities of many people, such as John the Baptist, Jeremiah, and Josiah have entirely different causes, and they are not punishments which have been called down upon some sin they may have committed, just as God Himself excused Job.

Thus, there are other reasons why the church is subject to the cross, and it is worthwhile to think about them. They can be arranged in this order:

1. Sin is common to the human race because all men are universally subject to death.

2. Since the world does not recognize this disease and its contempt for God and His wrath against this evil, God oppresses the church even more in order that it might understand these evils and we might be called to repentance.

3. Because the devil roars and commits slaughter in the church.

4. God wills that the understanding of our own weakness increase in us and that we set aside our confidence in ourselves and be ardent in our prayer to God. Therefore He puts His saints to work, as Paul says [2 Cor. 1:9], "We have the sentence of death in us, so that we should not trust in our own virtue but call upon God."

5. That our afflictions might be testimonies of our immortality and the glory to come. Because there is no difference between Nero and Paul in this life, the future life is absolutely necessary.

6. That our afflictions might be testimonies to our doctrine. Because the saints give preference to confessing their sins, it is evident that they sincerely believe this way.

7. That we may be made like the image of the Son of God. For in the same way Abel, Isaac, the Baptist, Jeremiah, and Josiah were types of Christ.

8. Often afflictions are punishments for certain sins, as in the case of the exiles of David and Manasseh, and the illness of the king of Babylon.

9. That the saints are showing obedience not for the sake of their own pleasure, but because of God.

10. That the church might understand that it does not rely on human protection but that it has God as its protector. Thus Abraham was schooled in the dangers of his wanderings in which he carried the doctrine [of the Gospel] with him. For the same reason the people were kept in the desert.

This entire teaching regarding the primary sources of human calamities is unknown to philosophy, which thinks that the cause of human death is the uncertainty of our mortal frame, like the death of an animal, and that miseries are piled upon us either by sheer chance or because of human carelessness. For this reason we should omit all reference to the fables concerning compensating for purgatory. They have no testimony in the prophetic and apostolic Scripture. We should consider the other major causes of calamities as taking place in order that we might recognize the wrath of God and be sorry for it, and place before us once more our true consolation and comfort. And finally, we should understand that the final purpose of all calamities is that faith might increase, according to the statement [Ps. 50:15], "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you."

Fifth, although God often punishes particular sins with particular punishments, we need to understand that the punishments are lessened by our repentance or even entirely remitted, as the story of Jonah testifies. And Is. 1[:18] says, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Again [Zech. 1:3], "Return to Me . . . and I will return to you." Jer. 3[:22], "Return, you children, and I will heal your backslidings," 30[:11], "I will correct you in justice and will not let you appear to yourself as innocent," that is I will admonish you about your sin by means of a chastisement, yet I will not destroy you. Joel 2[:13], "Return to God, because He is merciful . . . and remits His punishment." 1 Cor. 11[:31], "If we were to judge ourselves, we would not be judged. Here pertain those statements which seek mitigation in our punishment and at the same time testify that sins do indeed deserve even greater punishment, but we pray God to spare our infirmity, as it says [in Ps. 130:3] "If You, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?", that is, if You will to carry out all punishments, we all will be immediately destroyed. Again [Ps. 6:1–2], "Lord, do not rebuke me in Your anger . . . Have mercy on me, for I am weak." Jer. 10[:24], "O Lord, correct me, but with justice, not in Your anger, lest you bring me to nothing." Hos. 11[:8 ff.], "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I afflict you, Israel? With justice I could destroy you as Admah and Zeboiim. My heart is turned within Me, My sympathy is stirred. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger. I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst." That is to say, "When I reveal Myself among you, I will give you My Word. I do not want you to perish. I will preserve a remnant among you." Hab. 3[:2], "In wrath remember mercy."

Finally, we must always keep in mind the statement in Ezek. 33[:11], which is proclaimed regarding the mitigation of punishment, "As I live, says the Lord, I do not will the death of the sinner, but that he may

turn and live." Here are pertinent the many examples of those people whom Christ healed, to whom present punishments were remitted.

Let us keep before us every day these statements and others like them, since we ought to think about the public and individual punishments and seek their mitigation. These very troubles instruct us concerning these passages, and we should remember that each of us is chastened by our present punishments and that our repentance and prayers mitigate them. I believe that this is the meaning of many other passages, such as [Tobit 4:11], "Alms deliver from all sin," that is to say, it is something which pertains to punishments in this present life, that is, they merit the mitigation of the calamities of this life. This teaching concerning present punishments and the mitigation of them is useful and gives instruction to godly minds regarding many important matters: the wrath of God, the causes of many of our great troubles, divine promises, and the strengthening of faith and good works. For we learn that the punishments of men are softened by all our repentance, not by those rituals of satisfactions of which the monks speak—which they say are works that we do not owe [to God] but have value even when they are done in a state of mortal sin. But there are many crazy ideas among the notions of the monks, and it is helpful to refute some of them.

Sixth, the satisfactions of the monks obscure both the Law and the Gospel, and augment the worthiness of the traditions of men. [1] For they have the idea that in performing satisfactions there is something greater than the Law of God, and they dream that the Law of God is satisfied by other works. Thus, it is necessary in the church that there be taught the doctrine that in this life even the regenerate fall far short of the perfection of the Law. [2] Furthermore, they also obscure the Gospel because they think that eternal death is abolished by what we earn. Indeed, the unschooled easily transfer these satisfactions to the remission of guilt. [3] They overemphasize human traditions and define satisfactions as being works which we do not have to perform, that is, such things as human ceremonies, fasting on certain days, abstinence from certain foods, the reading of certain prayers. But in the church this word must be proclaimed: "In vain do they worship Me by the traditions of men," [Matt. 15.9], that is, human observances are not the worship of God, and they are of even less value as compensation to escape eternal death.

From all these testimonies it is evident that even if the ancient church had certain rituals by which those who had become polluted [by sin] were separated from the others, yet the notions of the monks regarding satisfactions and compensations are imaginary and vain. For it is false to say that eternal death is abolished by our payment. Godly minds must be brought to Christ, our propitiator, and the light of faith must be kept burning so that we keep in mind the merit of Christ. This teaches us that freely, not for the sake of our own works, our guilt is removed and eternal death abolished. Yet in the meantime we need to understand that the church is under the cross and often punished for certain sins by particular temporal punishments, but that these are moderated by our total repentance and by performing the works which we owe to God. Therefore, in order that repentance may increase, there should also be an increase in the performance of the good works of our vocation and in our total obedience which we owe to God, and so that we may properly distinguish between true worship and the observance of human rituals.

Others may scream about the ceremonies of canonical satisfactions as much as they will, yet these things which I have said must be taught regularly in the church as things which are true, clear, firm, and useful for pious people.

Nor am I ignorant of the fact that in our time various pretexts are being sought for the defense of these ceremonies. For sophistry knows no boundaries. They drag in Cyprian, who speaks of the office of censor (which was a civil function) as an example which pertains to the remission of sins. Then, however, the opinions of the monks regarding recompensing for the penalties of purgatory had not yet arisen in the time of Cyprian.

Some are contending that the concept of satisfaction as a chastisement must be retained, just as Paul chastised the incestuous man. This chastisement was an excommunication which, since it was a matter of a true judgment, is a genuine bolt [from heaven], for God adds penalties [of His own], as it is written [Gen. 12:3]: "I will curse them who curse You." And we have repeatedly said that those who stubbornly resist must be struck down with excommunication. If the church, for the sake of example, with a certain degree of earnestness and yet moderation, wants to add a caution in the case of those fallen ones who are being received back, such a practice would not be improper, so long as there are no ideas about recompense or payment mixed in with the matter. Nor should we imagine that this practice is necessary because of the need of compensation for the penalties of eternity or purgatory, just as in days gone by the rites of satisfaction crept in and grew under this superstition.

Our adversaries raise these objections: Just as the mercy of God remits sins, so the righteousness of God punishes them. Therefore it is necessary that there be a payment or recompense for penalties, just as there was no remission of sins for Adam and David without punishment. I reply: The first part of this syllogism is correct. It does belong to the righteousness of God to punish, and the principal punishment and the one which assuages the wrath of God has been laid upon the Son. Further, in the case of those who have been converted, God does also universally punish sins in contrition, as Hezekiah says [Is. 38:13], "As a lion breaks all my bones . . . " Here the sorrow in Adam, David, and other

pious people is far more painful than death itself. Furthermore, He also punishes certain sins with certain temporal punishments, but also He often spares us so that all punishments are not carried out. For this weak nature of ours cannot endure such great anger, as it says [Ps. 130:3], "If You should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" And Ps. 78[:38], "He did not stir up all His wrath." Therefore, He promises a mitigation of these penalties for those who repent. For He does not wish the utter destruction of men, but that the church remain and that there be many who are suitable for the labors of this life and who are necessary for the church. Therefore He spares many in order that they can endure this training.

Also this objection is raised: "If we should judge ourselves, we would not be judged," [1 Cor. 11:31]. Therefore, lest God chastise us, the church is doing the right thing in imposing penalties in order that it may turn away divine punishments. This argument, although it is entirely specious, must be carefully considered. For in this very important matter there is great confusion between hypocritical and genuine chastisements. This statement of Paul is both salutary teaching and consolation, and he says it with regard to our entire repentance: "If we should judge ourselves," that is, if we should accuse and chastise ourselves with true sorrow and be converted, we would not be overwhelmed by punishments from God.

In the same way, the passages cited above teach us that by repentance the penalties are taken away or lessened. Isaiah 1 and Joel 2[:13], "Return to the Lord, because He is good and remits our punishment." And there are other statements like this. And thus it correctly follows: If the church is chastised, divine chastisement is mitigated. But these statements should not be understood in a hypocritical or outward way with reference to ceremonies, but of the true ministry of the church which calls for repentance not in the performance of ceremonies but in turning back to God. Therefore, true chastisement is the true sorrow of the heart and the mending of our sinful life. It is not a public spectacle consisting of the performance of a certain ritual which has been thought up by men that there might be the public display of satisfactions. The ministry of the church is spiritual, and it speaks of the conversion of the heart to God, of true sorrow, and of true spiritual renewal. These things merit the mitigation of punishments, for this is the worship which is pleasing to God. But chastisements or other works without any of the other parts of repentance—that is, without contrition and without faith—do not merit mitigation, because works which are without fear and without faith are not the worship of God, even though they are outwardly splendid. For the Law of God gives precepts concerning the heart [Deut. 6:5]: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart." And in Rom. 7[:6] it is said, "We should serve Him in newness of spirit and not in oldness of the letter," that is, with true conversion of the heart toward God and not only with external duties and rituals. Therefore, in this locus we should carefully note the confusion: in place of true chastisement, that is, complete repentance, they propose to us a shadowy image of it, namely, the external ceremonies of satisfactions, although they thereby move the statement of Paul [1 Cor. 11:31], "If we should judge ourselves . . . " over into the realm of the outward display of satisfactions. And it is a falsifying of the statement which is simple in itself, in keeping with this example: A man is pictured; therefore it is a man when his shadow is shown in place of his substance.

They ornament their satisfactions under the title of mortification: when the command is given to mortify the flesh, the church is correct (they say) in imposing certain acts of mortification on those who are repentant. Here again we need to caution the godly to distinguish between the hypocritical or unowed mortification and that mortification which indeed we do owe. Genuine mortification is either true sorrow in contrition or patient endurance of true afflictions, as when David was accused by Nathan and he truly was ashamed when he recognized the wrath of God, and he was in a state of true sorrow [cf. 2 Sam. 12]. Again, when he endured the calamities which followed, he underwent the mortification of which 2 Cor. 4[:10] speaks, " . . . always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ"; and Rom. 6[:6], "Our old man was crucified with Him"; and Rom. 12[:1], "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, which is your reasonable service." These passages are not talking about some simulated severity but about true sorrow and true patient endurance, about which it says in Ps.[51:17], "The sacrifice to God is a broken spirit"; and in Peter [1 Peter 5:6], "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God."

This patient endurance is a work which we owe and is the true worship of God, of which we have spoken elsewhere. And since the church is under the cross, it understands that this worship of necessity must be offered to God, and it makes a great distinction between this kind of worship and pretended external exercises or fabricated satisfactions. Nor are they [true] mortifications—the ones they perform without the command of God, which consist of unnatural punishments of the body such as the wounds which the prophets of Baal inflicted on themselves. Such unnatural tortures pertain to the rule [Matt. 15:9], "In vain do they worship Me . . . with the commandments of men." Likewise, these practices are in conflict with the precept [Ex. 20:13], "Thou shalt not kill." And again [1 Cor. 12:24], "Give honor to the body."

For God wills that we acknowledge that this life of ours and this marvelous nature with the harmony of all its parts and senses is His work and His gift, and that it is even the continuation of the image of God. Therefore He wills that the nature of men be treated reverently and taken care of, and it is against His will that it be corrupted by either pleasures or torment. But

because sin remains in us, sometimes there will be more than enough calamities which quickly destroy this mortal nature. He commands us to endure these when he says [Matt. 6:34], "Sufficient for the day is the affliction thereof," that is, do not call down upon yourselves even greater calamities, but patiently bear those things which befall you because of the wretchedness of this world, even those things which you have not called down upon yourselves.

It is useful to give instruction about this term "mortification" so that we may distinguish between pretended and true sorrows. And there is also another kind of voluntary way of suppressing our flesh: temperance and moderation in eating and drinking; industriousness in our labors; serious attention to our studies, to prayer and the other activities connected with our calling; the repression of our wandering lusts; and reigning in our anger. All these are works which we owe and virtues which we have often been commanded to practice. Luke 21[:34], "Take heed that your hearts are not burdened down with drunkenness"; Rom. 6[:13], "Do not offer your members as instruments of unrighteousness"; 1 Cor. 9[:27], "I take my body captive and keep it in subjection."

These exercises must be inculcated and practiced in order to control the flesh, not in order that they may constitute payment for past sins, but that they may thereafter prevent sin from taking place. For debauchery, hatred and neglect invite many other vices, as it is said [Ex. 32:6], "The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play." And our daily lives attest to the complete truth of this statement: "Our minds revel in things which are especially wicked." [Ovid, *de arte amoris* 2.437]. Again, "When the brutes of the field have a good time they are not made to feel guilty with remorse. They do things openly and then caressing Venus draws near with her art" [Ibid. 1.361 ff.].

There can even be a concern about repressing the flesh among the unregenerate, as in the case of Socrates, Pomponius Atticus, and others like them, who had many virtues, temperance, continence, and kindness. But in the case of the regenerate there are other factors and other goals which help them. These things came together in Joseph: he had control over his eyes and he fled adultery, and at the same time he prayed to God for help that he might prevail and that his desires might not overcome him. Further, he gave credit for his continence to God. He did not want to pervert the doctrine [the Gospel] by giving offense. It is necessary that the godly understand these struggles. Because it is a difficult matter, Paul includes this struggle under the term "mortification" so that when he says [Rom. 8:13] "If you mortify [put to death] by the Spirit the deeds of the flesh, you shall live," he is not only commanding us to repress our flesh in the way that Socrates did, but "by the Spirit," that is, looking to God, lamenting the weakness of our natures, seeking God's help and fighting against the devil. Thus also in another place [Col. 3:5] he says, "Mortify [put to death] your members," fear greatly when you think of the judgment of God and control your corrupt desires.

We know that we owe it to perform these exercises, and constantly, not as if they were satisfactions for a certain period of time or in a certain way. Thus the church in its sermons always gives such commandments. But what form applies to individual cases must be left to the conscience and opportunity of each person, so that consciences are not caught in traps and the prescription of a particular form, the eating of certain foods and fasts becomes a "tradition of men," and then we have something which pertains to the rule, "In vain do they worship Me by the traditions of men," and this, in turn, contributes little to true moderation. But we must be mindful of the constant mandate regarding moderation and continence [cf. 1 Cor. 6:10]: "Drunkards and fornicators will not inherit the kingdom of God."

Locus 14
Predestination

Since there is no human political organization—no great gathering of people—without many weaknesses, and since all nations are burdened down with calamities of one kind or another, the minds of men often ask whether there is some part of the human race which is under the particular care of God, and what this part is, or whether God hears some people and brings blessing to them, or has any kind of dealing with them except as secondary causes come into play.

Since no empire is eternal and great destructions happen to all nations, a more difficult question arises when we discuss these matters: where the church of God will remain in this world. John saw the church in Ephesus, Smyrna, and places nearby. But now in these same places everything is filled with raging Turks who condemn the Gospel, nor is there any permanent place for the church of God in this mortal life. God Himself has armed us with clear and firm testimonies in the face of these questions. First, He has demonstrated with manifest miracles that there certainly is a definite gathering of people which he loves, cares for, and will adorn with eternal blessings. We may turn our eyes to these miracles to strengthen ourselves, such as the preservation of Noah in the flood, the exodus of the people from Egypt, the sending and actions of the prophets, and the restorations from the dead which were accomplished by Christ, the prophets, and the apostles. All of these events testify that this gathering is of concern to God, and that these benefits have been given to it, and that God is truly present with them and is doing many things which are above and beyond the order and area of activity of secondary causes.

Thus, there is indeed a certain church of God. The entire human race has not been created for destruction and for the present miseries and for the things which befall our perishing condition, as is the case with plants and animals, whose physical matter soon perishes, taking on a different form in the cycles of birth and corruption. Although our eyes see that human bodies are now subject to death in the same way, yet these miracles and the resurrection of the dead testify that the human race was created in a different way and for a different purpose. The origin of men and the cause of their death and restoration has been revealed to the church.

This doctrine must be placed in opposition to human opinions and speculations about matter (*materia*). We must consider the fact that God has revealed Himself to the human race by many and clear testimonies to be no less of a blessing of God than the very act of the creation of things itself. Furthermore, although the ruins of kingdoms are great and frequent, yet we must know from these testimonies of God that the church of God will remain. And in order that we may continue to possess this comfort, it is useful to say something about election or predestination.

Christ says in John 10[:27 f.], "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hands." And in Eph. 1[:4] it is said, "He has chosen us in Christ before the creation of the world." And in 2 Tim. 2[:19], "The foundation of God stands firm, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His.' "

Therefore a church of the elect shall always remain, which God, in a miraculous manner—even in this life—shall preserve, defend, and govern, as it says in Isa. 46[:3–4], "You are carried in My bowels, you are borne up by My womb, to your old age I will carry you," that is, even in the final tragic times I will carry the church in its old age, "I made you, I will carry you, I will bear you, and I will save you." We must comfort ourselves with statements like this when we are troubled in the midst of these ruins and destructions of empires and when we ask where the church will endure.

There has always been an argument about the cause of our election. For example, there is the case of the two brothers Cain and Abel. Why was one preferred above the other? Likewise, people argue about Esau and Jacob. And there are many who know nothing except the doctrine of reason and the Law, who use their human judgment to conclude that the cause of our election is the Law or our own merits and worthiness. This is the way the Jews believed, and many of the Sententiarians[1] do likewise. But we must hold to these three propositions:

The first is that we must judge regarding our election not on the basis of the Law but on the basis of the Gospel.

The second is that the entire number of those who are to be saved is chosen (*electus*) for the sake of Christ (*propter Christum*). For unless we hold to the knowledge of Christ, we cannot speak of election.

The third is that we must seek no other cause for our justification or election. Thus Peter is elect because he is a member of Christ, just as he is righteous, that is, pleasing to God, because by faith he has been made a member of Christ. Just as when we speak about justification, we are governed by the Gospel or by our knowledge of the voice of the Gospel, so when we are going to speak about election, we must include the voice of the Gospel. This is the way we, who ought to

[1] A *sententiarius* was an advanced theological student certified to teach Peter Lombard's *Four Books of Sentences*.

be ordered by the knowledge of Christ and the Gospel, must judge [concerning our election].

Therefore, we must look for a promise in which God has expressed His will, and we must understand that no other will is to be sought concerning His grace outside of His Word. The immutable will of God is that we are to hear His Son, as He has said [Matt. 17:5], "Hear Him." This Word includes all the promises. Therefore it must be fixed in our minds and always meditated in our daily prayer that the command of God is eternal and immutable, so that we may believe the promise of grace, which is the sum of the Gospel, just as the prophets, Christ, and the apostles teach with continuous agreement. In John 3[:16] it says, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish." And John 6[:40], "This is the will of the Father, that everyone who believes in the Son may have eternal life."

Further, this is the proper and principal voice of the Gospel. And just as the preaching of repentance is universal and accuses all, as it is clearly stated in Romans 3, so also the promise of grace is universal, as many passages testify. For example, Matt. 11[:28], "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden." John 3[:16], "Whoever believes in Him shall not perish." Rom. 3[:22], "The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ, which is on all and over all who believe." Rom. 10[:12], "The same Lord over all is rich toward those who call upon Him." Rom. 11[:32]. "God has imprisoned (*conclusit*) them all under disobedience, that He might have mercy upon all," that is, He accuses the disobedience of all, He calls all to repentance, and again He offers mercy to all.

In the same way Isaiah, in each part of the verse in ch. 53[:6], uses terms which express universality: "All we like sheep have gone astray," and "the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Acts 10[:43], "To Him all the prophets bear witness, that all who believe in Him receive forgiveness of sins through His name." Acts 13[:39], "And by Him all who believe are justified." These words are understood in the same sense [1 Tim. 2:4], "God wills that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." Acts 10[:34], "God is not a respecter of persons." Deut. 10[:17], "God, who is powerful and terrible, shows no partiality." And there are many such passages in different places. For since God is God, He treats all equally: He convicts us of sin, and yet He receives all who flee to the Son.

After we have established the fact that the promise is universal, we need also to understand that it is by grace that we are received, for the sake of the Son of God, and not because of our worthiness. We are all guilty, and, as Paul says, to use his word [Rom. 11:32], "We are all imprisoned (*conclusi sumus*) under sin." Furthermore, Paul often uses and carefully impresses on us the word "freely" (*gratis*). Thus he teaches us about the promise which was immediately given to our first parents, and he often emphasizes this and spreads it far and wide. Indeed, through the apostles He carried it to all the Gentiles because He willed that the eternal church be gathered to the Son. Therefore it is certain that the cause of reprobation is the sin in men who do not hear or receive the Gospel or who reject the faith, even before they have departed from it. In those people it is certain that the cause of their reprobation is their sin and their human will. For it is a completely true statement that God is not the cause of sin and does not will sin. We know that word of Ps. 5[:5], "You are not a God who wills iniquity." And in Hos. 13[:9] it says, "Israel, you are destroyed, but your help is in Me." Saul of his own free will drove out the Holy Spirit, and of his own free will he fought against the Holy Spirit when the Spirit tried to move him. These things certainly are the cause of his rejection or reprobation, for the promise requires faith.

On the other hand, however, it is correct to say that the cause of our election is the merciful will of God, who does not will that the entire human race should perish, but for the sake of His Son He gathers and preserves His church. Paul wants to say this when in Rom. 9[:15; cf. Ex. 33:19] he cites the statement "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." He denies that men are chosen or elected on account of the Law, or that it is a prerogative of the human race. He does this in order that it might be entirely clear that the church is chosen and established for the sake of (*propter*) the Son; but yet in receiving there must be a grasping (*apprehensio*) of the promise or the knowledge of Christ. For we are chosen that we might be made members of Christ. Therefore, as we have said [in the locus] on justification, there is some cause or reason (*causa*) in the one who accepts, but [it is] not his worthiness, for he lays hold on the promise, with which the Holy Spirit is at the same time efficacious, as Paul says [Rom. 10:17], "Faith comes by hearing." So also regarding our election, we must judge from the effects (*a posteriori*), that is, there is absolutely no doubt that the elect are those who in faith take hold of God's mercy, which has been promised for the sake of Christ, and who never give up this confidence.

Thus, when it is said in John 6[:44], "No one comes to Me unless the Father draws him," there immediately follow the words [v. 45], "Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me." God begins and draws us by His Word and the Holy Spirit, but it is necessary for us to hear and learn, that is, to take hold of the promise and assent to it, not to fight against it or be hesitant and filled with doubt.

Moreover, although there have been many lengthy discussions, and despite the great mountain of arguments which have been piled up, it is necessary that we in true agony take refuge in this stronghold, namely, that we must judge concerning the will of God only on the basis of His express Word, and realize that the promise is universal and that the eternal and immutable command of God is that we hear the Son and

assent to His promise. Therefore, we must obey this, and not let our minds wander off and sink into the darkness by seeking an election outside the Word, and thus leave Christ and omit His command to cling to His promise. Rather, we must hold to things which are certain, and not doubt that God has truly revealed His will in His promise and truly stands by what He has promised.

We must determine that the promise of grace is not some empty fable, but being built up by true faith we must seek His blessings and determine that those things which have been set forth in the promise have been prepared for us. This faith increases in our daily prayer, as it is written [Matt. 7:7], "Seek and you shall find." Likewise [Luke 11:13], "How much more will your heavenly Father give His Holy Spirit to those who ask Him." He does not say "to those who despise Him" or "to those who reject Him," but to those who acknowledge their misery and seek His help. Likewise [Matt. 25:29], "To him who has, it shall be given." Again [Ps. 68:28], "Strengthen, O God, what you have done in us." And Phil. 1[:6], "He who has begun the good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ," that is, we must be aided by God, but it is necessary that we hear the Word of God and do not struggle against God when He draws us.

Thus the sweetest promise is given in Phil. 2[:13], "It is God who works in you both that you will and that you do the things which are pleasing to Him." God draws our minds so that they are willing, but it is necessary that we assent and not struggle against Him. He promises that He will be with us so that the salvation which has been begun may be completed, so that there may be some good things among men which are pleasing to Him, as though He were to say, "The devils and their instruments rush furiously about in the world to do things which are displeasing to God. They encourage the ravings of the Epicureans, idolatry, the oppression of the Gospel, unjust wars, unrestrained lusts, thieving, lying, and all things which arouse the wrath of God. But lest the entire human race be brought to destruction, some things had to be done which were pleasing to God. These things are performed by the godly in the church, such as the true worship of God, trust in Christ, the giving of thanks, the spreading of the Gospel, patience under the cross, righteousness toward our neighbors, love of purity, truthfulness, peace, and other good works." And these good works are performed by those who ask, as it says [in Luke 11:13], "He will give His Spirit to those who ask." In Eph. 1[:4] He says, "He has chosen us in Christ," in order that He may teach us that the cause of our election is not our own worthiness, but Christ, so that we do not consider our election apart from Christ and the Gospel, but always seek the cause of our election in the promise of Christ. Likewise, Rom. 8[:30], "Those whom He chose, He also called." This statement contains a sweet, salutary and manifold comfort, which is, however, ignored by the idle and empty-headed.

The first comfort is that it is never asserted that we are elect except in the company of the called. Further, they only are the called who hear, learn, and confess the Gospel. This visible gathering is the church, in which it is necessary that there always be some who are elect and heirs of eternal life. Moreover, it is very beneficial for the godly to know that the church of the elect is located in this visible assembly, so that we may know that we are all bound to the voice and ministry of the Gospel, and that election is nowhere else and that we are not to seek special revelations. Therefore, this passage commends to us that we be concerned about hearing and learning the Gospel, supporting the ministry and loving the fellowship of the church. The passage affirms that the elect are in this visible gathering.

The second comfort is that this passage admonishes that we must not remove the call from the counsel of our election. God has chosen us because He has decreed to call us to the knowledge of His Son, and He wills to make known to the human race His will and His blessings. Therefore He gives approval to and elects those who are obedient to His call. Therefore we should pay attention to our calling and assent to the Gospel and not reject it, for through it God draws us and certainly receives and aids those who assent to it. For it is said many times that God is efficacious through the Gospel. Therefore Augustine, although he is harsh in this disputation, yet in a book on predestination and grace writes thus: "God aids those who accept with appropriate piety the gift of His call and [who], to the extent that it is in man's power, help preserve in themselves the gifts of God."

The third comfort is the testimony that God is present with this visible company which has been called, and is efficacious in this called and visible company. For these words convince us of this [Rom. 8:30]: "These whom He called, He also justified; those whom He justified, He also glorified." Therefore, the reader should note here that the doctrines of the church, of the presence of God in this visible church, and of the election and call must be joined together.

Therefore, we must not turn our eyes away from the universal promise, but include ourselves in it and know for certain that in it the will of God is expressed. Paul leads us to the Word when he says [in Rom. 10:6], "Do not say, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " and do not let your mind wander with questions which seek God's will outside His Word, but [v. 8], "The Word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart." Nor does the ninth chapter of Romans disagree with this teaching which I have enunciated, that it is correct for pious minds to understand this very sweet comfort in this way. At that time the Jewish high priests condemned the apostles because of their hierachical orders and the law. So in our time, the popes and the others who defend their errors because of their honorable titles and order of succession, as they call them, boast that they

are the true church of God, and they apply the promises to themselves and say that the church cannot err, and they condemn and kill others who cling to the purity of the Gospel, call them seditious, and wage war on the church. In the face of this notion concerning a necessary order of succession, the doctrine and comfort of Romans 9 have been given to us.

And a two-fold comfort is offered to us: We are taught what the true church is, namely, the gathering which believes in the Son of God, and we are instructed that this true church is not bound to an honorable title or the so-called ordained succession of the popes and their colleagues. In the second place, we are taught that the Law is not the cause of our election, but that mercy is offered for the sake of the Son of God to all who cling to Him. And indeed, the text clearly says that the cause of reprobation is our stubborn rejection of the Son. Why did Israel, despite its eager "pursuing of the law of righteousness, not attain to the law of righteousness" [Rom. 9:31]? "Because," says he [Paul], "they did not seek it by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law" [v. 32], that is, they were rejected because they were unwilling to hear the Son and assent to the promise. As a pretext, they used the fact that they were defending the righteousness of the law, because a relaxing of discipline seemed to take place, since it detracted glory from their works.

Since they were caught up in this error, they opposed the Gospel. And the cause of their reprobation is in themselves, as it clearly says later in Rom. 10[:21], "All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people." Here God affirms that He offers His blessings to all, but in their contumaciousness they do not receive them. And on the other hand, He says most comfortingly [Rom. 9:16], "It is not of him who wills nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy," that is, mercy is the cause of our election, but it was necessary that this be revealed in the Word and that the Word be accepted. Therefore He expressly offers His universal [promise], and the same statement is made in both chapters [Rom. 9:33; 10:11], "Everyone who believes in the Son shall not be confounded." Thus He wills that with His mercy there is also a concurrent taking hold of it by our acceptance of the promise.

Students should know that the Hebrew expression in these words, "I will harden the heart of Pharaoh," [in Exodus *passim*] signifies the promise "I will allow him to be hardened," as when in our daily prayer we pray, "Lead us not into temptation." And examples occur from time to time which testify that by this Hebrew expression permission[2] is very often signified.

Great is the darkness in the minds of men in their knowledge of God. Without this divine light, most men have either Epicurean or Stoic notions, that is, the great majority imagine that men are not of concern to God. Others dream up the idea that God is sitting in heaven and writing unchangeable decrees on the tablets of the Fates (the *Parcae*), as it were, according to which He wills to distribute virtues and vices, just as the Stoics felt about the idea of Fate when they suggested that Paris and others like him were moved by a fated or predestined force. But we must set aside these ravings which come forth from our human darkness, and turn our eyes and mind to the testimonies which have been given about God. We must understand that God is truly free and wills only good things, and that He does not will sins. And we must understand that He has expressly revealed Himself and this will by clear and great testimonies—by the resurrection of the dead and by other [miracles]—and that He has bound us to the Gospel, in which Christ says [Matt. 11:28], "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." In keeping with this promise He freely and truly receives those who take refuge in the Son, and He allows those who spurn the Son to rush headlong into His fearful wrath.

Therefore, we should not accuse Paul of these Stoic disputations which militate against faith and prayer. For how can Saul believe or pray if he doubts that the promise applies to him, or if he receives these tablets of the Fates—it has already been decreed that you have been rejected, that you are not written in the number of the elect, and so forth? In the face of these imaginings we must learn the will of God from the Gospel and understand that the promise is universal, so that faith and prayer can develop.

In addition, we must cling to this comfort regarding the effect of election: God wills that the entire human race not perish, and He always calls through mercy for the sake of His Son. He draws and gathers the church and receives those who assent, and thus always wills that His church, which He aids and saves, shall continue to exist, as Christ says [John 10:27–28], "My sheep here My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand." It is beneficial to know these things regarding the effect of our election, in order that we may be certain that we are heard and helped, and know that the church cannot be destroyed by the devil. The verse "No one shall snatch them out of My hand" refers to a great conflict. Therefore let us strengthen our faith and pray that the Son of God will preserve His sheep, because at the same time He also says, "They hear Me and follow Me."

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[2] Some early editions of the *Loci* have "promise."

Locus 15
The Kingdom of Christ

The Gospel clearly teaches that the kingdom of Christ is spiritual. Christ sits at the right hand of the Father and intercedes for us, and gives the Holy Spirit and the remission of sins to the church, that is, to those who believe in Him and call upon God with confidence in Him that He will sanctify them, so that He may raise them up on the last day to eternal glory. In order that we may obtain these benefits, the ministry of the Gospel has been established, and through this men are called to the knowledge of Christ. And the Holy Spirit is efficacious through the Gospel. But meanwhile, before the last day, the church in this world suffers persecution, and there will be many evil men mixed in with the good in the church. This is the true and appropriate teaching of the church in regard to the kingdom of Christ and the Gospel. The Jewish error of the Anabaptists must be rejected and condemned. They have the notion that the church before the last day will be some kind of civil and worldly state in which the godly will rule, and by force of arms destroy all the ungodly and occupy all the empires of the world.

Therefore, let us gather testimonies not only for the refutation of these fanatic spirits but also because it is worthwhile to have these passages in mind so that we may comfort ourselves and arouse ourselves to spiritual exercises, for faith, for prayer, and for repentance. For this Jewish error for several reasons has this problem attached to it: it obscures and totally destroys spiritual consolations and does away with spiritual exercises, because human minds look only for those new worlds to rule, and they forget spiritual things and are burdened with despair when that hoped-for life of leisure about which they dream does not materialize.

The Kingdom of Christ Is Spiritual

John 17[:2], "You have given Him authority over all flesh that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is life eternal: that they may know You, the only true God; and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent." Here Christ testifies that His benefit and His kingdom are life eternal. And He defines what eternal life is, namely, not some earthly dominion, but the true and sincere knowledge of God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rom. 8[:34], "Christ who is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us." Is. 11[:10], "A root of Jesse shall stand forth . . . and the Gentiles will seek Him." These passages describe the priesthood and kingdom of Christ. They testify that both are spiritual. Christ does not establish some government of this world, but is interceding with the Father for us, and reigns in such a way that He desires to be invoked, and to hear, sanctify, and protect through the Holy Spirit those who call upon Him. Just as it is written elsewhere [Rom. 8:14], "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God." Again, [Jer. 31:33], "I will give My law into their hearts." These benefits are obscured when we look for a physical kingdom.

Rom. 8[:17], " . . . joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." Again, [Rom. 8:24], "We are saved in hope." Again, [v. 29], Those whom He foreknew, them He also willed to be conformed to the image of His Son." Likewise, [v. 36], "For Your sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." These statements testify that the glorification does not take place in this life, but that in this life we must endure afflictions and persecutions. Matt. 16[:24], "If anyone wishes to follow Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me." John 16[:22], "In this world you shall have sorrow." And 2 Tim. 3[:12], "All who wish to live piously in Christ shall endure persecution." These passages clearly show that the church in this life is subject to afflictions. Col. 3[:3–4], "Your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, appears, then you will also appear with Him in glory." 1 John 3[:2], "Now we are the sons of God, but it is not yet clear what we shall be like, but we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is." This passage also teaches that the glory of Christ's kingdom is not a worldly empire, but a spiritual one. When we have been raised up, we shall have new and eternal righteousness and life like the glory of the resurrected Christ.

Likewise, Paul clearly says that the Antichrist will rule until the last judgment, at which time Christ will come and destroy the kingdom of the Antichrist [cf. 2 Thessalonians 2]. Therefore, the true church will not occupy an empire but will much more be tossed about in the greatest dangers and afflictions. And 2 Peter 3[:3] says that "in the last days scoffers will arise" clearly deriding religion. Therefore, there will be those who persecute the church. And Daniel clearly says [ch. 7] that the beasts, that is the empires, shall be cast into the fire when Christ appears for judgment. Therefore some empires shall endure until the last day. In John 20[:21], when Christ sends the apostles, He only gives them the command to teach, and He says, "As the Father sent Me, so I send you." Therefore, it is evident that Christ was sent for the ministry of the Gospel, not to occupy the kingdoms of the world, as He Himself also says [John 18:36], "My kingdom is not of this world." And He forbids the apostles to seize kingdoms when He says [Luke 22:25], "The kings of the Gentiles exercise dominion, but it is not so with you." Likewise [Matt. 5:39], "But I command you that you not resist

evil," that is, that you do not take up arms to establish a new kingdom under the pretext of the Gospel. Thus, the apostles were sent for the ministration of the Gospel, that is, to teach and not to grasp the empires of the world.

Therefore, Paul says [cf. 2 Cor. 3:8] that the Gospel is "the ministration of the Spirit," that is, in the Gospel we are offered spiritual and eternal blessings, but we do not establish new kingdoms of the world. And in 2 Cor. 10[:4], he says, "The arms of our warfare are not fleshly but the power of God for destroying counsels." Again, 2 Cor. 5[:20], "Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, commending ourselves to you as the ministers of God in afflictions." Again [2 Cor. 1:24], "We do not have dominion over your faith."

Therefore, since the apostles have only the mandate to teach, it is irreverent to believe that the teachers of the Gospel must by force of arms establish new kingdoms, as the Jews and the Anabaptists dream, that in the last days the kingdom of God must be established in such a way upon the earth that the saints will rule and forcibly destroy all the ungodly, and that there will be no hypocrites in the church. And this Jewish delirium often erupts in the church. For in days gone by there were also those fanatic spirits, Chiliasts and Pepuzians,[1] who dreamed of such an Anabaptist kingdom.

We still need to gather testimonies which teach that in the church until the last day there will be a promiscuous mixture of the good and the evil. Luke 17[:28–30], "As it was done in the days of Lot, . . . so will it be on the day in which the Son of Man is revealed." Again [v. 34], "In that night there will be two in one bed, the one will be taken and the other left." Matt. 13[:30] regarding the tares, "Let both grow until the harvest." And a little later [vv. 39–41], "The harvest is the end of the world. . . . The Son of man will send His angels, and they shall gather from His kingdom all the grain, and those who do iniquity. . . . " Likewise [vv. 49 ff.], "Thus it will be at the end of the age: the angels will come forth and separate the evil from the righteous and send the evil into the furnace of fire." These statements testify that there will be no separation of the saints from the hypocrites until the last judgment.

Also we must consider the fact that pastors have the command to excommunicate by means of the Word, without the use of physical force, those who are guilty of manifest crimes. It is not the duty of human judgment to look into the hearts and to judge concerning those who do not have manifest crimes. Thus Paul [1 Tim. 5:19] says, "Receive not an accusation against an elder unless there are witnesses present." And those who cannot be convicted by witnesses should not be put out by human judgment. Thus before the last day it is impossible to establish such a church in which there are no hypocrites. But pastors must perform their duties—they must teach purely and faithfully and must request of Christ the glorification of the church. Meanwhile, in this life there will always be churches with a mixture of evil, and many ungodly people will hold dominion in the kingdoms of the world and will cruelly persecute the church until the glorious coming of Christ. And yet in the midst of these persecutions Christ with His good counsel will preserve some remnants so that the church does not entirely perish. Such is the kingdom of Christ in this life.

And it is also evident that even if some new church of this kind were to be established in the future, yet the teachers by their own judgment and without the manifest command of God must not take up arms to establish such a church. Nor is any such new command to be expected, for Christ would not issue any mandate contrary to the Gospel.

But because the Jews and the Anabaptists cite the prophets, who in speaking about the reign of Christ often do use figures of speech which are taken from the area of government in this world, I reply first: The Gospel is the interpretation of the prophets. Since the Gospel clearly teaches that the kingdom of Christ is spiritual, that it offers spiritual and eternal blessings, that it does not hold dominion in this world but rather suffers persecution, we must understand the prophets according to the Gospel. And thus, the apostles in the book of Acts clearly transfer the statements about the kingdom in the promise to David to this spiritual kingdom which is subjected to persecution. And Christ Himself criticized the apostles when they held the Jewish persuasion and thought that they were going to occupy the kingdoms of the world.

Second, the prophets themselves, although they use different figures of speech, yet from time to time they also bear clear witness that the kingdom of Christ is spiritual. Daniel clearly says [9:26] the Christ is going to be killed. And Is. [53:10] says, "He shall make His soul an offering for sin." Therefore He will not have physical dominion in this life. Besides this, they affirm that the kingdom of Christ is eternal, while no physical civil government in this life is eternal. Therefore the figures of speech which involve physical civil governments, which they sometimes apply to the eternal kingdom of Christ, must be understood allegorically. And this eternal kingdom begins in this life in the Spirit and in faith, and it will continue on forever after this life. Therefore, the prophets speak this way from time to time, with the result that they do not distinguish the times of this life from the life of the future. But sometimes they do distinguish and clearly are making prophecies of the future, that the church in this life will indeed suffer persecutions. Thus in Ps. 2[:2], "The kings of the earth rise up, and the princes take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed." And Ps. 116[:15], "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." And Ps. 72[:14], "Precious shall be their

[1] The Montanists were sometimes called Pepuzians because they believed in the immanent establishment of the millennium at Pepuza in Phrygia.

blood in His sight." Isaiah very beautifully describes the church in this life in ch. 30[:20], "The Lord will give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teacher He will not remove." This testifies that the church must be preserved, but yet only among afflictions.

Daniel clearly is prophesying about the persecution before the last day [in 11:33], "Those of the people who understand . . . shall fall by the sword." And shortly afterward [12:1 ff.], "At that time Your people shall be delivered, everyone who is written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to eternal life and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

We must cling to these and similar passages in order that we may have comfort under the cross and we must truly learn to understand that the kingdom is spiritual, that is, to seek spiritual consolations and to exercise our faith. These passages sufficiently refute the Jewish and fanatic opinion about a physical rule by the saints in this life.

Locus 16
The Resurrection of the Dead

The doctrine that affirms there shall be a resurrection of all the dead, and that then there will follow the judgment, eternal life, the eternal glory of the godly, and the eternal punishments of the ungodly, is clearly taught in the Gospel or in the preaching of the New Testment without any equivocation. Not only so, but also the resurrection itself is begun. The beginning of this new life—in which there will be new light, wisdom, and righteousness, without any sin and without death—had been demonstrated to the apostles and to the rest of the assembly which had been joined to the apostles and placed before all eyes, when Christ after His death came back to life, and many other prophets and fathers were also raised from the dead. And this marvelous work was not revealed to the church in vain. Christ willed that His own resurrection and that of others be a clear and evident testimony to His own people, who were gathered together among the apostles, and to the other groups attached to them during the forty-day period, that there is indeed a resurrection and eternal life.

But if we should often think of this, not only would our assent or faith be strengthened in our minds concerning this article, but also we would more easily bear the burdens of this brief and fleeting life, keeping our eyes on that most joyous fellowship with Christ and with those who have been raised. For doubt was removed during many of those days, (namely, the forty days) by the conversation and meetings among all those people and also by what they saw with their eyes, and by their conferences and conversations. For we should not think of Christ and those others who were raised as being furtive specters, who would flee when the apostles were present, but there were crowded and long meetings and familiar sermons concerning this great work of God, concerning the restoration of human nature, concerning the great glory which is given to us through the Son, concerning the spreading of the Gospel among the Gentiles. And finally, there were exhibited some sure testimonies of life and happiness. Nothing like this ever happened and nothing so great ever took place in the history of the world. And since God has not put this remarkable sight before our eyes for any vain purpose, we must always bear in mind this forty-day schooling. And on the basis of this and many other incidents, let us seek the testimony of Scripture regarding the resurrection and eternal life.

We must also hang on to the clear passages in the sermons of Christ, such as Matt. 25[:34], "Come, you blessed of My Father, receive the kingdom which has been prepared for you." And John 5, and John 6[:40], "This is the will of My Father who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him has eternal life. And I will raise him up on the last day." And Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 sharply contends for and beautifully describes this article.

Although the statements in the apostolic writings are well known, we shall gather some old passages from the prophets in order that the ongoing teaching of the patriarchs of the church, the prophets and apostles and the consensus of the universal church of God may be seen.

Is. 26[:19–21], "Your dead shall live; My slain shall rise again. Awake and sing, you who dwell in the dust, for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, My people, enter your chambers and shut your doors behind you. Hide yourselves for a moment until the indignation is past. For, behold, the Lord comes out of His place to punish the iniquity of those who dwell on the earth, and the earth will reveal her blood, and will no longer cover her slain." This very clear statement speaks of the raising of the dead, of the joys of the saints, of the punishments of the ungodly and of the present affliction of the church. Therefore it should be carefully considered. "Your dead," he says, "shall live." He calls the saints God's dead to signify that the church is afflicted for the sake of God; as if he were to say, "Your sons are also killed for Your sake, and those who are a concern to You shall live again." And what kind of life will it be? "Sing," he says; that is, the godly will live and flourish in everlasting joy, perfect knowledge of God, and perfect righteousness, without sin and death, just as they revive by "dew of herbs." Then he brings consolation regarding our afflictions. But sometimes it is necessary that the church be afflicted and death endured. They will be enclosed as in a "chamber," that is to say, they will be protected in the church and by the Word until the day of judgment. He [Isaiah] preaches about the punishments of the ungodly and repeats the statement about the resurrection: "The earth will no longer cover her slain."

Is. 66[:22–24], " 'Just as the new heavens and the new earth [will endure],' says the Lord, 'so shall your seed and your name remain before Me. And from month to month and from Sabbath to Sabbath all flesh shall come to worship before Me,' says the Lord. 'And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. Their worm does not die and their fire is not quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.' " This passage describes both the eternal punishments of the ungodly and the joys of the righteous; and it teaches what eternal life is like when it says, "there will be unending months and unending Sabbaths," that is, an unending festival day, so that all the saints shall adore the Lord forever. Therefore eternal life is unending adoration,

that is, the recognition of God and righteousness without sin and without death.

Is. 65[:17–20], "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be in remembrance and they shall not come to mind. But you shall be glad and rejoice forever in the things I create. For behold I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing and her people as a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people, and the sound of weeping shall no more be heard in her or the sound of clamor. Nor will there be an infant who does not reach maturity there, nor an adult who does not reach old age. For the young boy will die at the age of one hundred years, but the sinner will be punished for one hundred years."

Some passages are clearer than others. But they all testify that there will be a future renewal of the whole creation, and the godly will have everlasting joys. [Is. 65:19,] "The sound of weeping shall no more be heard in her," and therefore they shall be without sin and death. Again [v. 20], the infants and the adults shall live forever; but "the young boys who are a hundred years and the sinners who are a hundred years," that is, those who persevere in godlessness, they shall be punished. And because these passages teach that the church will undergo afflictions before the resurrection, and that it must first be glorified after the resurrection and after the renewal of the whole creation, the prophets clearly testify that the kingdom of Christ is spiritual and that it cannot be an earthly dominion before the resurrection, as the Jews and the Anabaptists imagine.

Is. 25[:7 ff.], "And He will destroy on this mountain the appearance of the binding strips with which all people were bound and the shroud that covers all nations. And He will swallow up death forever. And the Lord God will wipe away every tear from every face, and He will take away the reproach of His people from the whole earth." This passage also teaches clearly that death is to be abolished and the people of God delivered from shame and tears, that is, from sin, death, and persecutions. And what he says at the beginning, "the appearance of the binding strips," he also understands as death, because dead people were customarily bound in strips of cloth when they were buried. These bindings or bonds are taken away, that is, death is taken away.

Is. 24[:21 ff.], "It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord will visit upon the host of heaven and upon the kings of the earth. They shall be gathered together as prisoners in a pit and they shall be shut up in prison. And after many days they will be punished. And the moon will be disgraced and the sun ashamed when the Lord will reign. . . . " Is. 35[:10], "Those who have been delivered and redeemed by the Lord shall come into Zion with praise and everlasting joy." Is. 9[:6], Christ is called "the everlasting Father," that is, the giver of everlasting life. Dan. 12[:2], "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame," so that they may always see it. Hos. 13[:14], "I will deliver them from the hand of death, I will redeem them from death. I will be your death, O death; I will be your destruction, O grave." Ezek. 37[:12], "Behold, I will open your graves, My people, and lead you out of your sepulchers." This statement is also pertinent here, Ezek. 33[:11], "As I live, I do not desire the death of the sinner, but that he might be turned and live."

Pertinent here also are all the passages from the prophets regarding the eternal reign of Christ and the saints.

From Ps. 16[:9 ff.], "My flesh also will rest in hope. You will not leave my soul in hell nor give your Holy One to see corruption." For when the prophet speaks about Christ, he is also including His members. For he knows that through Christ the kingdom of sin and death is destroyed. Ps. 22[:26], "The poor shall eat and be filled, and they who seek Him shall praise the Lord. Their hearts shall live forever and ever." Psalm 33[:22 LXX], "The death of sinners is very evil." And thus since sinners are not punished in this life, they must be punished afterwards. And on the other hand, Ps. 116[:15], "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Therefore, it will be well with the saints after this life. To the same point pertains the passage [Ps. 34:19], "Many are the tribulations of the righteous, but the Lord will deliver them from them all." In Psalm 49 the fortunate godless are compared with the afflicted godly. This passage teaches that in death the condition of each of these is changed. In regard to the ungodly it says [vv. 14 and 19], "Like sheep they are laid in the grave and death shall feed on them . . . and they shall never see light." On the other hand, in regard to the godly it says [v. 15], "But God will redeem the soul from the power of the grave when He receives me." In the same way a comparison with Ps. 4[:7–8] is helpful, "They abound in wine and grain. In peace I will lie down and sleep."

Here are pertinent also all the statements regarding the eternal kingdom of Christ. Job 19[:25 ff.], "I know that My Redeemer lives, and on the last day I shall arise from the earth and I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see God, whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another." This is a remarkable passage which testifies that we truly will receive again the same body but in a renewed state, as Paul teaches [cf. 1 Corinthians 15]. Likewise it teaches what eternal life will be like, that is, the knowledge of God.

Christ argues from the passage in Moses, "I am the God of Abraham . . . therefore Abraham lives" [Matt. 22:13, citing Ex. 3:6], that therefore Abraham lives, because God does not concern himself about things which are nothing.

Similarly, we can convincingly argue also from the promises and examples in which this article of eternal life is in a sense indirectly involved. For example, God promises that He will preserve Abraham and the

other saints [Gen. 15:1], "I am your shield." And the saints in this life are terribly afflicted and seem to be forsaken, although they still are of genuine concern to God. Therefore a new life remains in which the saints will be glorified after this life. They will keep their eyes fixed on this new life, remembering that all injuries, troubles, and calamities are to be disregarded and in no way to be compared with the great reward [which awaits them].

Likewise in the first sermon cited in Gen. 4[:7], "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do evil, your sin lies in wait until it shall be revealed." Therefore it is necessary that there remain a second life in which Abel will receive his reward. And this follows, that there also remains a judgment of all sins and of all those sins which have not been punished in this life. An example of this universal judgment is the flood, also the iniquity of the Sodomites and of other crimes like this, because there is no doubt that God will punish all sins.

Likewise, the first promise in Gen. 3[:15] makes a prophecy of the abolition of the kingdom of the devil, that is, the abolition of sin and death. Therefore, the nature of man will be taken away. And Jacob prophesied about the Savior of all the nations [cf. Gen. 49:10] whom the patriarchs understood to be the founder not of some earthly kingdom, but of a kingdom of righteousness and eternal life. They saw that the church in this life was going to continue in the remnant of sin and afflictions, just as they saw that Abel was killed and Abraham was commanded to kill his own son as a sacrifice. In this type they clearly understood that the seed which had been promised would be the sacrifice.

Enoch and Elijah were taken to God while still living, as the text clearly says about Enoch [cf. Gen. 5:24]. And these actions are a clear testimony of eternal life. For if they were merely put out of existence they would not be with God. For to walk with God is to live with God in a certain kind of divine life. Therefore, these examples are more valuable than if the promise were only given by words without any examples. Nor is there any doubt that the holy patriarchs fully explained the promises as well as these examples.

The conversation of angels with Abraham and the other patriarchs is also a testimony that there is a life to come. The angels are a sign that we shall be their companions in the eternal life in which they now exist, because they care for us and protect us.

In Num. 23[:10] Balaam says, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last day be like theirs." And in 24[:17], "I see Him but not now, I behold Him but not near."

Locus 17
The Spirit and the Letter

When we think about the difference between the Old and New Testaments, between the letter and the Spirit, everything becomes clearer if we keep our minds fixed on the consummation of our deliverance, as we have mentioned above. When we think of the resurrection of Christ and of the others who have been raised, who then were adorned with new and everlasting glory, we see that the Gospel bestows on those very people who have been raised from the dead also light, wisdom, righteousness, and everlasting life, and it does not show to them the darkness of the death to come.

Therefore, the letter signifies doctrine of whatever kind—thoughts, practices, discipline, and good intentions—which are without the Holy Spirit, that is, without true fear and without true faith or the confidence which comforts our minds, with the knowledge and invocation of Christ.

On the other hand, the Spirit signifies that the Holy Spirit is truly beginning and finally perfecting in our hearts the new light, wisdom, righteousness, and everlasting life which is pleasing to God and burning with the emotions engendered by the Holy Spirit, that is to say, with fear, faith, invocation, and love, and which in eternal life rejoices in the sight of God and celebrates Him. Then, as Peter says [Acts 2:4 ff, v. 14b], the Spirit signifies fellowship with the divine nature, as it is written in Joel [2:28], "I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh." The emphasis of the language here is important. When he says "of My Spirit upon all flesh," he uses the word "My" [to refer to the Spirit] who proceeds by the will of the eternal Father and the Son and kindles light, wisdom, righteousness, and a life which is in accordance with the divine will. Thus Paul is speaking of the Spirit when he says [2 Cor. 3:18], "But we all with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image as by the Holy Spirit." When in our knowledge of the wrath of God we stand in fear and again are directed by comfort and faith, we find our help in knowing the mercy of God, which is given to us for the sake of Christ, when we deal honestly with God and sense both His wrath and His mercy, and we are kindled with new light by the Holy Spirit.

Although Saul the hypocrite and David the reborn both perform similar outward acts, whether of the moral, the ceremonial, or the civil law, as kings or as public officials, yet in their minds there is a great difference. In the hypocritical Saul, his thoughts about good works and his very actions themselves are dead and darkened letters, that is, his mind was without a true feeling of the fear of God, without the consolation which should govern his mind, or the trust in the presence and help of God. But he was a doubter, whether he was regarded by God, heard by Him, or helped by Him. Thoughts of this kind are without divine light, and they are in conflict with the light of faith. Therefore, they are the shadows of death. But in the case of David, whether he was waging war or making a sacrifice, there was always the feeling of fear toward God and faith which consoled the mind and determined that God truly was present, was guiding and helping his calling. These emotions come from the Holy Spirit and they truly acknowledge God. They are not the fleeting shadows of death, but the beginning of eternal life.

And David prayed for the kindling and increasing of this light when he said in Ps. 51[:10], "Create in me a clean heart, O God,"that is, a heart which believes uprightly about God, acknowledges the wrath of God and His promised mercy, which determines that we are seen, heard, aided, protected, and preserved by God. And "right spirit," that is, a steadfast spirit in my inner being, that this new light from God may be steady, not quenched by the devil with his tricks, or by Epicurean or philosophic thoughts in which many wise men are sunk with their eternal doubts. [Ps. 51:11], "Cast me not away from Your presence and take not Your Holy Spirit from me," that is, by Your Holy Spirit guide my counsels and all my emotions, and arouse in me emotions which are in keeping with Your law, such as fear, faith, love of God, endurance, energy in carrying out my calling, etc. [v. 12], "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation," that is, sustain me with Your comfort in my troubles, that I may not perish broken under shame and sorrows. "Uphold me with Your free Spirit," that is, increase my strength in my afflictions so that I can bear them and willingly obey You and not depart from You in raging and doubt concerning Your mercy, as Saul did. Thus he seeks, in the first place, the light by which he may truly acknowledge God and the strengthening of the knowledge of Him. Then he seeks renewal and guidance in his actions, and finally comfort and support in his difficulties.

Therefore, since this light was kindled in the mind of David, all his good actions—inward and external, pertaining to the moral, the civil, or the ceremonial law—are actions of the Holy Spirit, and not the letter or shadows. On the other hand, in the case of the hypocritical Saul, who is without the light of the Holy Spirit and burdened down with hypocritical or philosophical doubts, all his actions—inward and outward, his good intentions, and his works, whether of the moral or civil or ceremonial law—are the letter and the shadow of death, and not the beginnings of eternal life.

This is Paul's meaning in 2 Cor. 3[:6–8], when he calls the Law "the ministration of death," but the

Gospel "the ministration of the Spirit." For he believes that without the knowledge of the Gospel, the Law produces only philosophic discipline or terrors. But discipline, that is, the righteousness of human reason—whether of Pompeius Atticus, or hypocrites who are without true fear of God and true faith, which invokes God by the knowledge of Christ—is nothing but the letter, that is, a shadow which does not bring life. Regarding the terrors, as in the case of Saul, it is manifest that our minds are terrified by the knowledge of the wrath of God when they are not guided by the word of the Gospel, and they flee God and rush into despair and eternal destruction.

But the Gospel is the ministration of the Spirit. Nothing is sweeter than this word and nothing can be imagined which is more pleasant. It is clearly affirmed through the preaching of the Gospel that the Holy Spirit is given, as it says in Gal. [3:14], "That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." When our minds are terrified, they hear the voice of the Gospel and believe that for the sake of the mediator our sins are truly remitted, and the Holy Spirit is received and new light is kindled in our hearts, as it is written in Zech. [12:10], "I will pour out upon them the Spirit of grace and of prayers," that is, with My comfort I will guide them and with My Holy Spirit I will help them, so that they may know that they have been received into grace, and having received it they may call upon God and be obedient to Him. But Paul clearly says that the Holy Spirit is given through faith or to those who believe. Therefore, in the case of those who do not blush with a feeling of the wrath of God and do not believe the word of the Gospel but remain contemptuous of God or in doubt, for them the Gospel is only a letter and a shadow which has no effect.

Therefore, we must set aside the ravings of Origen who says that the letter is the grammatical sense used in the description of ceremonial and historical matters, but the Spirit is the allegorical interpretation of these ceremonies and historical events. Following this hypothesis he later on took far greater license than the church can allow and dreamed up fictitious interpretations, almost as a painter does when he paints imaginary creatures such as chimaeras, sea monsters, and centaurs.

There is one natural meaning for the language of the prophets and apostles in the individual statements, which their phraseology, correctly understood, creates in keeping with the precepts of their common ability to speak, and this shows their reason for speaking as they do. In other cases, the rituals themselves or the historical events are sometimes images or examples of other things. For example, the Passover lamb was a sign or symbol of the death of Christ, which was to take place in the future. When Daniel was kept alive in the midst of the lions, this was an example of the deliverance of many learned men and the entire church, which, by a similar blessing of God, protects them amidst the raging of tyrants. These comparisons are allegorical interpretations, and to create them properly and beautifully is a matter of great learning, wisdom, and judgment. And yet, just as the laws or the Gospel accounts are not figurative, and, without the ardent emotions kindled by the Holy Spirit, are mere letters and shadows, so these allegorical interpretations without these emotions are doctrine and letters.

When Paul says in Rom. 7[:14], "The law is spiritual," clearly he is speaking of the moral law, and he is not trying to transform it into allegory, but he calls it spiritual because it is the spiritual judgment of God, not only civil discipline (that is, the laws of Solon and others like them which instruct us regarding external discipline). But the Law of God demands ardent spiritual emotions, knowledge, fear, trust, and love of God, and finally perfect obedience. On the other hand, the judgment of God is the frightful ministration of divine wrath which presses upon all men—not only because of their outward sins, but also because of their inner darkness and uncleanness. Paul is speaking of this horrible judgment, but not with Origenistic allegories and fables. It is most regrettable that this very important doctrine, which belongs to the church—the use of the Law, the ministration of the Gospel, faith, the giving of the Holy Spirit, the true exercises of faith, prayer, and, finally, the emotions kindled by the Holy Spirit—has been obscured and obfuscated by these dreams of Origen, who failed to interpret correctly the letter and the Spirit.

Always and at all times, all doctrine, whether Law or Gospel, to the unregenerate is only letter and a fleeting shadow, that is, it does not bring new and eternal light and life. But the promise of the Gospel at all times was the ministration of the Spirit to those who believed or were born again through faith. When the reconciliation which has been given has been received for the sake of the mediator, and when faith has been kindled, then the Holy Spirit begins the new and eternal light and life in us, as it says in Rom. 8[:6], "The mind of the Spirit is life and peace." Moreover, it is extremely important in this article to consider the power and worth of the ministration of the Gospel. The passage in 2 Cor. 3[:18] clearly asserts that through the Gospel the Holy Spirit is given. Therefore, we should not seek other revelations or enthusiasms without the Gospel, but we should rest content in the promise of the Gospel itself, because when we do this, it is certain that the Holy Spirit is efficacious.

But in regard to discipline, we have already said under that locus that all men who have not been born again or are extremely weak need to be urged forward and made accustomed to virtue by the discipline according to the Law which does apply to us. And elsewhere I have mentioned the four causes or reasons, of which the first is that it is necessary to be obedient to the discipline when God commands it. The second is that we may avoid punishments, because God horribly punishes the violation of His discipline, as all the

catastrophes of the world testify. The third is that all the rest of mankind is in need of peace and tranquility, for we should not think that we live only for ourselves. The fourth is the most important of all, namely, that "the Law is a schoolmaster unto Christ,"[Gal. 3:24]. And it is the duty of a schoolmaster not only to urge but also to teach. Therefore, this description should commend the Law to us. It wishes that it be placed before us, in order that it may teach us regarding the wrath of God and good works; that it should habituate us to good morals and to zeal for learning the teachings about God; that it might lure forward the faint-hearted by the fear of punishment. But its great virtue is that by this discipline we are called to Christ, not because the discipline deserves or merits the remission of sins, but because Christ is not efficacious in those who despise His discipline, who persevere in the violation of discipline against conscience. These points we have fully discussed above.

Locus 18
Calamities, the Cross, and True Consolations

Although it is evident that the thoughts and eloquence of all wise men in the church and among the heathen are exhausted in deploring human miseries, yet all confess that the enormity of this grievous burden which the entire human race must bear cannot even be fully understood.

A large number of frightful examples exists, and examples are set before us in order that we may be warned about our weakness and be humble about it and not rush into dangers and punishments because of our stupid lusts. And our daily life also shows examples of this to the unlearned. Wise men have always argued about the reason why the nature of man, which is above other animate creatures, is subject to so many miseries; what is the source of death; why there are so many diseases; why is the destruction of our bodies in direct opposition to our plans and wishes; why there are terrible confusions among the nations, changes, ruinations, pestilences, people starving to death, cities buried by earthquakes, whole nations drowned in floods, great cities almost completely destroyed by sudden fires, and finally many other tragic events which befall us collectively or individually without our consent.

The philosophers look for the cause of these things in matter, which they say flows by an eternal force to other forms and seeks changes. From this idea Aristotle constructed his dogma of the privation or diminution in matter. I do not doubt that this idea was first developed by thinking of human death and miseries, and then by the incessant alternations of birth and death of all plants and animal life which we see. He [Aristotle] believed that these incomprehensible alternations took place, that things went and returned, because of the lacks or desires which are found in matter.

Then other philosophers came along and added their ideas, such as the concept of efficient causes or the concurrence of stars and their positions which produced variations in matter. Hence in Manilius [*Astronomia* I.III] we read, "And all things are moved by the god and face of the heavens, by the various stars in their movements in their predetermined order."

Thus the philosophers, in the midst of this thick darkness, ask the causes of human death. And what Menander says is very true, namely, that accidental (*automata*) evils are infinite, yet even more numerous are self-willed (*hekousia*) evils, that is, the cause of these things is either an error in judgment or a will which is stubbornly opposed to right judgment. Thus Pompey by an error started a civil war, and Paris, by an act of his will, kidnapped Helen and thus brought a war upon Asia. A murderer brings punishment down upon himself by his self-willed crime. David, by an act of his will, seized the wife of another man and drew down upon himself and his nation terrible calamities. A person can enumerate as many examples of this kind of thing as there are sands upon the seashore.

In regard to the voluntary action, the philosophers to some extent see the cause, but they do not see the primary cause for the accidental evils of men. The church in its teaching—as it has been handed down from the very beginning by the voice of God and propagated by the patriarchs, the prophets, Christ, and the apostles—makes proclamation regarding the source of accidental evils. Thus we must note this distinction between human philosophy and the heavenly doctrine on this point. Not only is the source indicated clearly, but also the true and reliable comforts and remedies are offered to us.

The principal cause of death and the many other calamities of the human race, the godly and the ungodly, is the first stubborn disobedience of our first parents, and this stigma has been passed down to their posterity. Thus it says in Rom. 5[:12], "Through sin death entered into the world, and death came upon all men, for all are guilty." If human nature had not been turned against God, that vigor would have remained which is life-giving and which had been bestowed by God upon human nature, nor would men have been subject to corruption like vegetables and flowers and the beasts of the field. But after man lost his integrity or wholeness, matter became weaker and began to be like the nature of vegetables and animals. And thus God, who had been angered because of sin, allowed our wretched nature, which had been deprived of His gift, to fall into death, as it says in Ps. 90[:7], "We have been consumed by Your anger." And now all the accidental (*automata*) evils pertain to the same cause of our distress.

Following this corruption of our nature, there is a great darkness in our minds, also many errors, great weaknesses, many lusts, faulty emotions, and contempt for the judgment of God. Thus Cain and Esau, even if they were born of upright parents and carefully brought up to be virtuous, were motivated by evil lusts, ambition, and jealousy. And daily the Greek saying [attributed to Solon] is fulfilled by Absalom, Anthony, and countless others like them who dream that they shall obtain empires: "Driven by their desires, empty men count up empty possessions." Thus by the errors and evil desires which follow the corruption of our nature, we pile up evils, so that even the pagan poet exclaims as he laments the misery of mankind, "The earth is full

of evils, and so is the sea" [Hesiod, "Works and Days," 101].

Furthermore, the devil, a spirit who is hostile to God and raging with hatred against Him, adds to our confusion and arouses lusts in our weakness. Thus he piles up the accidental and the willful evils and increases the ravings of Caligula, Nero, and others like them, so that when the wrath of God is aroused our punishments and miseries increase. Who can even fully contemplate these sources of evils? We see in these examples, and experience in our miseries, that the troubles of mankind are sadder than men can even comprehend in their thoughts, or describe in their words.

But it is even more difficult to contemplate the greatness of the cause, how enormous an evil sin is, what the anger of God is when by a definite law He punishes sin, and how great the raging of the devil is as he adds to the miseries of men. These causes can be understood in a general way in the overwhelming evils in the whole nature of men, both in the church and among the ungodly. But here the much more difficult question is that, since death and other calamities are punishments for the sins and crimes of mankind, why is the church of God even more burdened down with miseries than the godless multitude? Why is Abel killed by his brother? Why does the tyrant Manesseh cruelly cut Isaiah in half with a saw [cf. Heb. 11:37]? Why does Apryes kill Jeremiah? Why do the priests kill Zechariah? Why does Herod kill the Baptist? Why does Pilate kill Christ? The examples are well known. Very often the church of God is a small group retaining the profession of the true teaching and enduring various heavy burdens which are common to all, and some which are peculiar to the church. Jacob lost his wife in childbirth. Joseph lost his son. The poor person wanders, without a definite dwelling place, among evil and arrogant people.

Often worldly princes hold power—men who are ignorant and contemptuous of the prophetic and apostolic doctrine and lord it over the church not only with their wealth and their glory and pleasures, but also with civil power, so that how often do we compare godly princes with the power of Alexander, Pyrrhus, Scipio, and others like them?

The miseries of the church prompt many people to have strong doubt whether God is concerned about any part of the human race, or whether there is indeed a church of God at all, or whether they alone are the people of God, who hold to the prophetic and apostolic doctrine, or whether God hears this group in their troubles. Finally, since these well-known tragedies cause many people to turn away from God and embrace Epicurean notions, it is necessary that the church be warned against these scandalous ideas and be taught why the church is subjected to these miseries—that despite them it is still heard by God, aided, sustained, and ultimately delivered by Him. This is the wisdom which belongs to the church. Therefore, we must first review the impelling and final causes or purposes of these things, then learn them, and think of them often.

1. Because of the fall of our first parents and the remnants of their sin which inheres in us in this corrupt nature, the church of God is subject to physical death and other troubles, just as the rest of the human race is. Rom. 8[:10], "The body is doomed to death because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

2. Since the world does not consider that this inner uncleanness of human nature, our doubts about God, or our neglect of Him are things which are condemned by God, and since it despises the wrath of God, the church is even more pressed down because God wills that His wrath against sin be seen, and He wills that repentance increase among us. 1 Peter 4[:17], "Judgment begins at the house of God"; and Jer. 30[:11], "I will correct you in justice, lest you think you are innocent"; Is.[66:2], "Upon whom shall I look except on him who has a contrite heart and trembles at My words?"

3. Because the devil burns with even greater hatred toward Christ and the church, he craftily sneaks madness into the church and often creates divisions, as when he stirs up heresies. He often subverts the saints, as when he caught David in that great web of miseries, so that he drove many of those who were caught in it to despair. Concerning this cause it says in Gen. 3[:15], "The serpent shall bruise His heel." And what great misery those poisoned bites are which the godly often experience, as in the case of David who scarcely could extricate himself from all those sins and offenses. Also note Matt. 12[:44], [where the unclean spirit says], "I will return to the home from which I came." And 1 Peter [5:8], "Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion walks about seeking whom he may devour."

4. Very often calamities are punishments for particular sins which God in His wrath imposes on men because of their sins, so that at the same time He may punish crimes and also bring back the fallen to repentance. And these punishments, since they are imposed because of lapses, are also used as examples, so that the rest of the people may be instructed and learn to fear God and improve their behavior.

Thus David, because of his adultery and the delivery of Uriah to death, was tormented and punished with terrible torments: his son killed his brother, and afterward stirred up a sedition, drove his father out of the kingdom, and polluted his father's wives with incestuous shame. Finally, no human language can describe the enormity of the catastrophes which David endured over a period of many years. Likewise Uzziah [2 Chron. 26:16–23] was punished with leprosy because he was going to make a sacrifice contrary to the law. Manasseh was taken into exile because of his worship of idols and his killing of the prophets. And regarding the entire nation and the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, Jeremiah says in 22[:8 f.], "And everyone

shall say to his neighbor, 'Why has the Lord done this to this great city?' Then they will answer, 'Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God and worshiped other gods.' " Amos 2[:4 ff.] says that the people had taken up idols, and "I shall send a fire upon Judah and it will devour the palaces of Jerusalem . . . because they have ground the poor to powder . . . and a son and a father have had relations with the same girl to violate My holy name."

Further, the sermons and the historical portions of the prophets are filled with examples and testimonies which show that this fourth cause applies very broadly. Very often particular sins are punished with particular calamities that are common both to a group and an individual, because, in order that the matter might be clear, the forms of the punishment fit the sins, as it says in Wisd. 11[:17], "By what things a man sins, by the same he also is tormented." As when David took the wife of another man, his own marriages were in turn polluted. Likewise his son killed a brother and took up arms against his father because he [David] had polluted his own seed with his adultery. The accounts of the pagans have countless examples in which the forms of punishment fit the crimes, as when Oedipus bore children by his mother, and consequently the sons perished in a mutual murder. Antigone was killed by her daughter. Thus the outcome shows that the offspring had been cursed. Likewise, the histories show that the punishments had wide ramifications, and that from one crime countless sins and many calamities arose. Therefore, when we wonder at or deplore the greatness of human catastrophes, the countless confusions of our lives, and the innumerable ruins of nations, we must look to the source: as sins mount, so do the punishments, even though God mitigates them, as I shall point out later.

But now let us speak specifically of the punishments of the church. We need to know that the church is punished, and we must keep in mind the testimonies which show this: Mic. 7[:9], "I will endure the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him"; Ps. 89[:32 ff.], "I will punish their iniquities with the rod, but I will not take My mercy from them"; Is. 64[v. 5 f.], "You are indeed angry, for we have sinned, and we have continued in our sins, and finally we shall be delivered . . . we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have scattered us." This is a vivid description, and a very doleful picture of suffering. In the same way churches, nations and families are scattered and laid waste by the winds because of sins, as was the case with the ten tribes of Israel, among whom the remnants of the church still continued even after they were carried away into exile and scattered far and wide. Christ is speaking of this kind of punishment in John 5[:14], "Do not sin again, lest something worse befall you." And Paul says 1 Cor. 11[:32], "When we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord so that we may not be condemned with the world." Rev. 3[:19], "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."

5. That our afflictions may be testimonies to doctrine. For although Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the Baptist were not punished for some particular sins which they had done, yet they endured great burdens for other reasons. First of all, this was done that they might understand the wrath of God against the common sin of mankind, and then endure the controversies because of the confession of their teaching. For both of these elements are observable in the troubles which Paul endured, that is to say, that he did not bring the Gospel around to the people for the sake of his comfort or his pleasure, but for the sake of his doctrine he sustained great miseries, when otherwise he could have lived among his fellow men in a position of honorable leisure. And also because he truly and earnestly believed that his teaching was true, he confirmed it by the fact that he preferred to endure even death rather than turn away from his proclaiming of the Gospel. Matt. 16[:24] speaks of this cause: "He who wishes to follow Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me." And 2 Tim. 3[:12], "All who wish to live piously in Christ shall suffer persecution." Ps. 126[:5], "Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy." Ps. 116[:15], "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

6. That the afflictions may be a testimony of immortality. For although God has promised good things to His people, and here in this life He permits them to be frightfully oppressed by the ungodly, yet with clear testimonies He shows that He gives His approval to the Baptist, to Paul, and to others, and it is necessary that there remain for them another life in which the Baptist and Paul are adorned with good things, and for their sakes Herod and Nero are punished. Thus Peter says [1 Peter 4:17], "And if judgment begins with us first, what will be the end of those who reject the Gospel?"

7. That "we may be conformed to the image of the Son of God," as it says in Rom. 8[:29]. And Christ Himself says [Matt. 10:24], "The disciple is not above his master." Christ endured punishment and torment because of our sin. He assuaged the wrath of God so that we might be accepted, even though we are unworthy. But because we are received, that we may be made heirs of the glory which Christ merited for us, it is necessary that first this body of sin be destroyed, as it says in Rom. 6[:6], "Our old man is crucified with Christ that the body of sin might be destroyed."

8. Even in the case of those in whom the punishment is not for some particularly vicious actions, yet there is the inner uncleanness, the carnal security, self-pride, and many doubts. These evils must be emended under the cross and we must beware of future lapses, as it says in 2 Cor. 1[:9], "We had the sentence of death over us, that we not trust in our own goodness." To this cause many statements and examples are pertinent. For God wills that in all the saints there be an increase of repentance and gifts. 2 Cor. 4[:16], "Even though

our outward man is perishing, yet the inner man is being renewed every day." Prov. 3[:12], "Whom the Lord loves He chastens." Heb. 12[:6],"He scourges every son whom He receives." Ps. 119[:71], "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes." Is. 28[:19], "Vexation gives understanding." Is. 26[:16], "Lord, in trouble they have visited You." The anxiety in which they cry out is training for them.

9. That it might appear that the saints render wholehearted obedience not out of their ambition or only for the sake of some present advantages, but principally that they might serve God and glorify Him, as it says in Ps. 44[:17], "All these things have come upon us, but we have not forgotten You."

10. That it might be apparent that the church is not gathered, defended, and preserved by human counsels and protection but by the Son of God Himself, who is the head of the church, and under the leading of divine power, and in our weakness the presence and power of Christ may be seen as He fights for us against the raging of the devil and tyrants. 2 Cor. 4[:7], "We carry about this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellence of the power may be of God and not from ourselves." Ps. 20[:7], "They trust in chariots and horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God." Ps. 44[:1 ff.], "We have heard with our ears, O God, and our fathers have told us of the deeds which You did in their days, in days of old. Your hand scattered the nations, but them You planted . . . They did not gain possession of the land with their own sword, nor did their own arm save them, but it was Your right hand and Your arm and the light of Your countenance." John 15[:5], "Without Me you can do nothing." 1 Cor. 1[:31], "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." Hos. 13[:9], "Destruction is yours, O Israel, and only in Me is your help." Is. 46[:3 ff.], "You were carried in My bowels, you were borne up in My womb. Even in your old age I will carry the church. I have made you and I will bear you, I will carry you and I will save you." Is. 48[:11], "For My own sake, for My own sake, I will perform it, that I may not be blasphemed, and I will not give My glory to another."

I have now listed the causes or reasons on account of which the church is subject to great burdens. This recitation is not given only to comfort our minds out of rhetorical habit, but I have done this in order that we might understand that these are genuine reasons and they are very important, if we really give serious consideration to our own burdens and those of men in general. These ideas are ridiculed by the Epicureans and all others who are drunken with pleasures or the love of glory. But the godly recognize that in real troubles and sorrows we must diligently meditate on this true teaching, and that as a result of this we must stir up our minds to fear God and seek true consolations. For just as beneficial remedies cannot be offered to the sick unless the cause of their sickness is determined, so we in the church must learn to understand the causes of our miseries and deplore them, just as we must recognize the wrath of God against our common sins and our individual sins, and we must curb the forces within us which lead us away from the Law, as we consider the enormity of our frightful punishments. And then we must seek the remedy.

Philosophy errs in both points, for it does not see the principal reasons for human miseries, nor can it give us an effective remedy. It explains things in terms of matter, and thinks that man is in no way different from vegetables or violets or roses. Hence it does not understand what a great fall has occurred in the nature of men. Thus it quite properly criticizes the erring and depraved desires of men, but it does not understand the root problem, nor does it condemn our ignorance and our contempt for God.

Then it provides remedies which only increase the sorrow and unworthiness of the feverish mind. They only say that the evil, when it cannot be gotten rid of, must be borne out of necessity, just as they drive their horses or cattle to the point where they suffer death. What does it help, they ask, to add to this unavoidable evil the useless torments of the mind and the fact that they will achieve nothing? The good mind, says Plautus, in a bad situation is only half of the evil. Nor do they offer any mitigation, aid, or deliverance, but tell us to flee all occasions for trouble to the greatest degree possible. Hence the Epicureans teach that a person must avoid being the ruler of his government, because it is abundantly clear that governing is filled with troubles and dangers and often brings a tragic outcome, as the examples of Palamedes, Thrasybulus, Demosthenes, Cicero, Pompey, and Caesar bear witness.

Some [philosophers] indeed do call for more serious virtues, but in this request they omit many things; yet it is true that they say that we must not act contrary to any virtue because of sorrows. For example, Cato because of his grief must not commit suicide, for that would be acting contrary to righteousness. Coriolanus must not give way to the desire for revenge and bring war upon his fatherland because of his anger, for then he would be forgetful of the duty which he owes to his country. Demosthenes, when he was driven from his city, must not therefore lament in a womanish manner, for that would be contrary to propriety, which acts with moderation in every situation.

Having listed these consolations, they then proceed to lament the miseries of the human race and cite many examples of calamities because the burden seems much lighter when we all together bear in common the common miseries of the human race. Finally, when they see that certain tragic evils cannot be made lighter by any kind of comfort, they then take refuge in the statement: "It would be best if we had not been born." Thus in the consolation of the philosophers there is absolutely no mention of God, no deliverance, no escape, no helper to be seen. Just as those who are in good physical condition do not pay much attention

to the speeches of doctors, and just as those who are drunk with pleasures give no consideration to the admonitions of either philosophers or preachers, yet on the other hand a sick mind earnestly seeks a remedy and wherever it is offered he receives it, but especially he finds comfort if he understands that consolation is offered to him by God with definite testimonies, and then he seeks the thoughts of wise men which will bring some relief to his sufferings in his troubles. And the very comparison of these teachings is beneficial to a good mind and adds light to the divine comforts and makes them even sweeter, and raises up our minds so that they give thanks to God because He has been truly affected by His concern for our troubles and demonstrated this by beautiful testimonies. For He has shown to us His Son, that He might be a witness and guarantee of God's mercy toward us. With many and ample instructions He promises help and deliverance to those who seek His aid in their calamities, and He adds examples of famous deliverances, and we experience examples of these things every day. Therefore, it is useful to keep in mind and place before our eyes the chief points of our consolations, which were given us in the heavenly doctrine, and it is necessary that we cling to certain well-known points which must instruct our minds regarding the will of God. For these have been given to us in order that we may ponder them and that they may urge us to the knowledge of God and bring us His aid.

Now we shall take up five axioms dealing with comfort which have been given us by God which we must always keep in mind.

1. The first is that all men, and particularly the church, need to make certain that our afflictions do not happen only by accident but with the knowledge of God. Although afflictions do indeed come either from material things or from the devil or from the wickedness of men, we must understand that they are permitted by the counsel of God and that He set bounds to them beyond which the maliciousness of the devil and of men cannot reach. And although this first point is certainly not a matter of complete consolation, yet at the beginning we must drive out of our minds Epicurean notions and destroy them. Indeed there is no doubt that particularly for this reason the church is tormented harshly and then again delivered, in order that there may increase in us the light which teaches us the truth that men are not born and do not die by mere accident, but it is the truth that it is God who has revealed Himself by sending His Son, and He has given to us His Word, and He is truly wrathful against sin, and that He cleanses those who repent. And it is no small battle to free our minds from Epicurean ravings. Therefore, we must steep ourselves in these axioms first.

Matt. 10[:29], "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them falls to the earth without your Father's will. All the hairs of your head are numbered. Do not be afraid, you are worth more than many sparrows." Acts. 17[:28], "In Him we live and move and have our being." Ps. 33[:15], "He fashions their hearts individually. He understands all their works." Ps. 94[:9], "He who formed the eye, shall He not see?" In the Lamentations of Jeremiah 3[:38], there is a clear refutation of the words of the Epicureans, "Who is he who has commanded a thing to be done, when the Lord commanded it not? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and evil proceed? Why should a man complain against God?" Ps. 100[:3], "Know that the Lord is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture." Is. 45[:6 ff.], "I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evils," that is, punishments. [V. 19] "I the Lord speak righteousness and announce truth." Zeph. 1[:12], "And it shall come to pass in that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will visit the men who are settled in complacency, who say in their hearts, 'The Lord will not do good nor will He do evil.' Their houses shall become a desolation." [1 Sam. 2:6], "The Lord kills and makes alive."

Here let each person make note of the many testimonies in order that he may firmly determine for himself that troubles do not arise by accident, but are decreed by God and that He as a righteous judge is truly angry at their sins and punishes evil-doers, but He chastens the godly by His own counsel in the same calamities. Let them affirm this first axiom and the testimonies which will be cited in the passages which follow and the cases which have been cited above, because they always include the mention of God, both as the one who punishes and the one who chastens and delivers, as it says in Ps. 118[:18], "The Lord has chastened me severely."

Countless people have no Epicurean notions in minor situations or ordinary difficulties but normally hold the persuasion that human matters are of concern to God. But when the troubles become unbearable, they absolutely give up this idea and conclude that all things are in a state of confusion and rise and fall by mere accident and without the counsel of God, some pleasantly and some tragically. Finally, the lying spirits, using the darts of the devil, impair their minds to such a point in these troubles that they come to despise God by the Epicurean notions which have been created. Therefore, our minds must be diligently forewarned against these darts of the devil.

2. The second axiom is that nothing is loved or even borne with equanimity without some good reason. Thus, when Saul finally concluded that he was only being punished by God, he ran away from God with tragic raging. Thus in the midst of our troubles we must keep this good reason in our minds. We must remember the ultimate reason why God punishes. Above we have discussed the matter of impelling and final causes. But whatever the impelling causes of something may be (which can be of various kinds and un-

known to us), we must always cling to the ultimate reason or final cause with the firmest faith, namely, that God punishes or chastens us not to destroy us but to bring us back to repentance, or to move us so that fear, prayer, and other virtues may increase in us. When we come to recognize this good will of God, then our mind begins to submit itself to God in every respect, and it can bear the punishment or the troubles with a calm mind.

This properly is the doctrine of the Gospel, which has been handed down from the very beginning through the patriarchs, the prophets, Christ, and the apostles. From this we know that, although the human race is subject to so many sorrows, yet we must not fall into eternal destruction, but recognize the wrath of God against sin and by this admonition be drawn back to repentance and return to God who is our helper. Adam and Eve understood this when they saw the death of Abel, and they believed that they were being instructed concerning their own sin, but yet they also understood that God willed that they should not lose all hope of eternal life. They remembered the promise which had been given concerning the Seed, that when death had been abolished this Abel who had been killed would return to them. But yet in times of great sorrow it was hard for them to be delivered from their doubt.

Therefore, this doctrine is repeated over and over again in the prophets: Ezek. 33[:11], "As I live, says the Lord, I do not will the death of the sinner, but that he may turn and live." God swears that He punishes not to destroy, but to draw us back to repentance. 1 Cor. 11[:32], "When we are judged by the Lord, we are chastened, that we may not be condemned with the world." Ps. 119[:71], "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes." Rev. 3[:19], "Those whom I love I rebuke and chasten." Is. 28[:19], "Vexation makes you understand what you hear." [V. 9], "Whom shall He teach knowledge . . . those that are weaned from the milk, that are drawn away from the breasts?" Is. 26[:16], "Lord, they seek You in distress. They poured out a prayer when your chastening was upon them." Heb. 12[:6], "He chastens every son whom He receives." Prov. 3[:12], "Whom the Lord loves He corrects." Matt. 11[:28], Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Here Christ commands all who feel that they are burdened down with miseries to seek Him as the helper sent from God." And in Is. 61[:2 ff.], He says that He has been sent by God "to comfort all those who mourn . . . [and] to give the oil of gladness for mourning."

Finally, the passages used in connection with the following axiom teach the same points, and contain promises in which God promises deliverance and help to those who are afflicted. He testifies that He is present with those who call upon Him in their calamities, as it says in Is. 57[:15],"I dwell . . . with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and the heart of the contrite." Ps. 34[:18], "The Lord is near to those who have a broken spirit." Therefore, He does not punish in order to destroy, but He shows His wrath in order to encourage us to repentance, as it is written [Gal. 3:22], "He has imprisoned all under sin in order that He may have mercy upon all." It is sad to be imprisoned under sin, for it signifies being made subject to the wrath of God, to sin and to torments. Thus David was imprisoned under sin when he was driven into exile and stripped of the glory of his power, as if he had been completely rejected by God. The Emperor Maurice was imprisoned under sin when his daughters, his son, and his wife were murdered before his very eyes. But in these enormous difficulties we must cling to the second part of the passage, namely, "that He may have mercy upon all." We need to know that in the greatest of our torments we must still not forsake God, but determine for ourselves that He wills to receive us and deliver us from eternal wrath. But experience shows how difficult it is in the time of great catastrophes to cling to this comfort.

3. The third axiom of consolation is the promise of help, the mitigation of punishments, the presence of God, and deliverance. The axiom is far removed from philosophy. For human reason does not judge that God was present at the expulsion of David. When Cato saw that Pompey had been killed and that Julius had conquered, he became angry at God and said that he, a just man in his opinion, had been unjustly deserted in a most honorable cause. But the doctrine of the Gospel testifies that men are not rejected by God because they have catastrophes, but rather that thereby God is promising His aid and the mitigation of their evils and their deliverance. Nor should we think that these consolations are merely vain words. They are true realities, and faith awaits the outcome, as these examples show. Therefore, we shall first cite some of the promises to strengthen ourselves.

Nah. 1[:7], "The Lord is good, a comfort in tribulation, and He knows those who trust in Him." Joel 2[:13], "Return to the Lord your God, for He is kind and merciful, and He relents from doing harm." God wills this, for Joel says that God is moved by repentance, even though He chastens. Ps. 34[:18], "The Lord is near to those who are of a troubled heart." Ps. 147[:3], "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." Ps. 50[:15], "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." Is. 57[:15], "I will dwell with him who has a humble and contrite spirit, to revive the hearts of those who are contrite." Is. 66[:2] "To whom shall I look if not to him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, who trembles at My words?" Matt. 5[:3], "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn."

God finally delivers His church from all its miseries. But in the meantime, in this life, it is necessary that we obey in the time of troubles because it is His

will, as has been said. The church is under the cross and yet every day He delivers many from their physical miseries, and even when He does not deliver them entirely, yet He mitigates their troubles. The prophets often describe this mitigation and pray for it, and we must also learn to ask for it. For this weak nature of mankind cannot endure the enormity of God's wrath, if He should burn with the anger that our sins deserve. Thus David cries in Ps. 6[:1], "Lord, do not rebuke me in Your anger." Again, Ps. 130[:3], "If you, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" That is, if His wrath only matched our sins, we would all instantly perish. Ps. 78[:38], "And He did not stir up all His wrath." Jer. 10[:24], "O Lord, correct me, but with justice, not in Your anger, lest I am reduced to nothing." Hos. 11[:8–9], "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? Shall I destroy you like Admah and Zeboim? My heart is stirred within Me, My sympathy is aroused. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger. I will not destroy Ephraim again, because I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst," that is, I will not permit My Word to return void, because I have given it to you. Hab. 3[:2], "In wrath, remember mercy." Is. 64[:8 f.], "But now, O Lord, You are our Father. We are the clay and You are our potter, and we are all the work of Your hands. Do not be furious, O Lord, nor remember our iniquities forever. Look, all of us are Your people!"

We must consider these statements very carefully concerning the mitigation of punishments, in order that, even when our miseries are not completely taken away, yet we may understand that we do receive help, are supported and strengthened in the meantime, so that we can endure the burden and lighten our calamities. Hagar was driven from the home of Abraham with her son in the midst of great trials, and they almost perished from thirst, both she and her son. Still, she was heard by God and helped by Him who showed her a well. In the same way, as individuals we seek and expect some mitigation so that our weakness does not succumb. Thus in Rom. 8[:26] it says that "the Spirit aids us in our weakness."

4. The fourth axiom is that the church and individual godly people in times of troubles, when they consider the three points which I have just given, must add their own faith and invocation. For God gives the sweetest and fullest promises in order that we may cling to them in faith, be upheld by His expected kindness, and finally call upon Him and glorify Him. Let us take refuge in God, having been instructed by these words. Let us seek and await divine aid, and take comfort in these promises, just as the godly in Egypt, in the wilderness, or in the Babylonian exile took comfort, knowing that God was present, that He was aiding them, and that there would finally be an end to these troubles.

All men seek, as much as they are able, visible protection in times of adversity. One trusts in his money, another in the favor of powerful friends. When these things fail, many people are destroyed with mental anguish and find no comfort. This sorrow demonstrates that they trust only in visible things, not in God. It is permissible to use things which have been established by God, as when David used his army; but the divine Word rejects this confidence in things without trusting God [Jer. 17:5]: "Cursed is he who trusts in the arm of flesh." This unrighteous trust is very quickly found wanting when we lose these visible supports and when we are deserted by our friends. Hence the laments of tyrants are more ridiculous than pitiable: "Bereft of friends, O wretch that I am, I am destroyed." Why do you trust in these things and then embark on improper or evil endeavors?

David is more correct when he says [Ps. 27:10], "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." And more correct is the Canaanite woman who, when she had given up all hope of human remedies, sought help from Christ and would not permit herself to be deterred, even though at the beginning Christ answered her very harshly.

In the course of our life, in dangers and miseries, we need to learn what kind of trust God demands and what kind He rejects. Nor can these precepts be understood without some experience. Indeed the church is burdened under the cross, so that in these testings faith may grow. Faith is often quenched in leisure and pleasures, as it is written [Ex. 32:6], "The People sat down to eat and to drink and rose up to play." Likewise, Deut. 32[:15], "He [Jeshuran = Israel] grew fat and kicked." But in order that we may remind ourselves of this kind of invocation, we need to cling to these statements: Ps. 50[:15], "Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you, and you will glorify Me." Ps. 9[:10], "Those who know Your name will put their trust in You. For you, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You." Ps. 55[:22], "Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you." Ps. 34[:6], "This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him." Ps. 145[:18], "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth." John 16[:24], "Ask and you shall receive." Luke 18[:1], "We must always pray and not grow weary." Phil. 4[:6], "Be anxious for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known unto God." And faith should always be exercised in this way, in order that first it might seek the remission of guilt and afterwards the mitigation of punishment, as I shall describe later under the subject of prayer.

5. The fifth axiom. Statements were cited above regarding the will of God in the midst of our torments, namely, that they do not take place merely by accident, because God punishes not in order to destroy, but to draw us back to repentance since He wills to help us, since He wills that aid be sought from Him and expected from Him, and that we should recognize the good will of God even in our calamities. Whenever we consider those statements we should know, finally, that it is the

command of God that in catastrophes we who believe this way must be obedient to Him and not become angry at His chastening, but acknowledge that His punishment is just and submit ourselves to the will of God and be willing to bear this punishment humbly, in order that we might be obedient to the righteousness of God. For God wills that in all His punishments we see the ordering of His righteousness and His wrath against sin. Since this obedience and the mitigation of our sorrow have also been mandated by divine command, we must fight against sorrow and indignation.

The following passages teach this: Micah [7:9], "I will endure the indignation of God because I have sinned against Him." And the consolation is also added, for it is not sufficient that we know the precept or endure evil, but, as I said at the beginning, faith and prayer must be added, and thus Micah also says [v. 8], "When I sit in darkness, the Lord will be my light." 1 Peter [5:5 f.], "God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God." He gives this precept in order that we may be obedient to God even when He presses us down. He calls it His "mighty hand," a term which can be understood in two ways: the hand of God is powerful both to overturn the proud and to guide the afflicted. Nor is there any power so great, so thriving with glory and riches, that God cannot overturn it, as the history of all ages shows.

But remember the examples of the saints, of David and Nebuchadnezzar. These men were cast down from the place of highest honor, and they learned that they had been in safe positions not by their own power, nor by the trustworthiness of their friends, nor by the protection of human weapons, but by God, who preserved, protected, and governed them. The list would be too long if we were to cite the cases of the heroes who were tragically overturned: Achilles, Hercules, Ajax, Jason, Philip of Macedon, Pompey, Anthony, and countless others. Their sad endings confirm the statement: "He who is arrogant in this world" is an abomination before the Lord, that is, the man who is boastful without knowing and fearing God is destroyed. Thus, great is the ruin of proud men who lord it over others, not only with their power, but also with their strength.

Again, God often shows His power in directing the godly, as when Joseph was delivered from prison, David after being driven out was restored to his kingdom, and Manasseh, although for a long time a captive, was finally freed unharmed after his repentance. In these Scriptural examples it is affirmed that God is the author of these deliverances so that we may understand that the same is the case in examples not recorded in Scripture. When things which are adverse to us are mitigated or taken away, this comes about because of God's help or His guiding counsel, and the outcome is described in Ps. 28[:7], "The Lord is my helper and my shield, in Him my heart has hoped, and I have been helped." 1 Cor. 10[:10], "Do not murmur as some of them murmured and were destroyed by the destroyer," as is told in Num. 21 with regard to the fiery serpents. Ps. 37[:7], "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him." This is a short sermon dealing with most important things. It includes two parts: the precept concerning obedience, and the teaching concerning the consolation which we are to ask of God and expect from Him. Ps. 46[:10], "Be still and see that I am God." This is a marvelous precept and one which is unknown to philosophy, but is in keeping with the statement in Is.[30:15], "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength."

What, then, is this quietness? What is it to be still? It means, first, obediently to bear the burdens which have been laid upon us; then not to undertake things without a calling; third, not (as is customary for human unbelief) to run hither and thither seeking various kinds of protection, and among them some righteous and some unrighteous things, as did the kings of Judah, who now leaned toward Egypt and now toward Assyria, and now toward others, caught up in wrongful treaties and finally compelled to follow the raging of foreign overlords. To this lack of patience and running about on the part of those seeking help without a righteous order of things are addressed these words: "Be still," that is, be quiet, await help from the Lord, do not run in all directions to Egypt, Syria, the Turks, the Africans. In a good cause, be calm in mind and await your help from God; and if something worse happens, yet it is better to endure troubles than to disgrace a good cause by dishonorable counsels.

I have now explained the five points which have been given to us under the doctrine of the Gospel regarding our enduring of miseries, points which are unknown to philosophy. Furthermore, when our minds have been strengthened by this faith, they then bear afflictions, and then our patience or endurance is truly a sacrifice, that is, the worship of God or a work commanded by God and performed with the very purpose that honors might be given to Him. As it says in Ps. 51[:17], "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." And Rom. 12[:1], "Present your bodies as living sacrifices." But the laceration of the body itself is not a sacrifice (as the Gentiles think), but the sacrifice is our obedience to His will or the endurance of it in times of trouble, when indeed our will looks to God and seeks and awaits aid from Him. Nor are calamities which we bring upon ourselves sacrifices, as when the prophets of Baal stabbed their own bodies or the followers of [Publius] Decius vowed to sacrifice themselves to die for the sake of the Republic.

These mad actions of the Gentiles are to be condemned and rejected, but the endurance of calamities of this kind is a sacrifice which goes with our calling, just as the torments of Christ, the prophets, the apostles, and of all pious people accompany their profession of the truth, or they are punishments which follow our

common frailty or our sins, such as illness or legitimate punishments, as when thieves and murderers are punished. And we say that the enduring of these miseries becomes a sacrifice, as it says of them in 1 Peter 1[:6], "For a little while, if it is necessary, you have been grieved."

Therefore the thief, when he is brought to punishment, endures the torment of his own making. First, let him determine that he has not come into this punishment by accident, but by the knowledge and permission of God and with His definite counsel. To what end or why? Why am I being punished more than the other purse snatchers in the court who have stolen more? God wills that you recognize His wrath against sin, and He is calling you to repentance. Now think how great is your weakness. Driven by blind greed, you have robbed another person. You have yielded to the devil who delights in the wickedness of men. Now therefore you are caught in this punishment. But do not yield again to the devil, who will try once more to turn you away from God. Begin to know the Son of God, Jesus Christ, and understand that for His sake you are received by God. He will comfort you now also, just as He did the robber on the cross. Therefore obey God, who in the midst of these public penalties is showing examples of His wrath against sins and instructing men that they should consider how great is the wickedness of the devil, who drives poor and weak men into these awful miseries. Say as Daniel did [Dan. 9:7], "We have shame, but to God belongs mercy." In these sad spectacles, God does not drive us poor wretches entirely away, but we can flee to His Son and be sure and certain of being received by Him. Therefore, govern your mind by faith and the knowledge of Christ, seek comfort and look for eternal life through Him, just as the thief on the cross did.

In an example of this kind, we can see the difference between the endurance of which the philosophers spoke and the patience which the Gospel proclaims. The philosophers say nothing about the chief causes—nothing about God, nothing about divine help or deliverance. Therefore, this should be the definition of this virtue, according to the philosophers: patience is to be obedient to reason in our miseries, so that we may to some extent lessen our sorrow in order that we do not act contrary to justice or other virtues. Thus Cato acts unjustly when he brings death upon himself. Coriolanus acts impiously when he brings a civil war upon his country and his kinsmen. Demosthenes acts without propriety when in a womanish manner he laments being driven into exile. And how much does a guilty person sometimes want a just punishment, as Adrastus, who had accidentally killed the son of Croesus. Yet human reason cannot go along willingly with an unjust punishment or a particularly frightful one. For example, Palamedes, Socrates, and others like them endured punishments not because they wanted the punishment, but they endured them as if they were being torn to pieces by lions.

But Paul wills a punishment in a different way, because he knows the testimony of confession. David wants a punishment in a different way, because he knows that we owe God this obedience; he knows that an example of His wrath has been given to the whole human race in his punishment, and especially the fact that he awaited a mitigation in the punishment. Therefore in the definition of the Gospel here is added this statement: patience is Christian, and to obey God in enduring troubles is Christian, so that we do not turn our backs on God or become angry at Him or act contrary to His precepts, but we temper the anguish of our minds and look for help and aid and mitigation from God. A comparison of these definitions shows the difference, and this is even clearer in some of the examples. David realized that he was being punished by the counsel of God, and he obeyed God and sought mitigation of his punishment. Socrates wondered at the injustice he was enduring and gave no thought to the counsel of God; he thought he was being persecuted by sheer chance so that even if he should experience an accident of a tower falling on him, he still would not seek help or deliverance from God.

Therefore, we must separate ourselves from the Gentiles in this matter of our troubles and learn especially because of this that the human race is loaded down with such great burdens in order that we might be drawn to the knowledge of God and true worship of Him. Whenever we see death, sicknesses, injuries, wars, pestilences, floods, the destruction of cities and the innumerable other calamities, both individual and common to us all, God wills that we seek in wonderment the causes of these miseries and deliverance from them. The thought of Plato is highly praised in the Epitaph, where Cicero expresses it thus: "For he whose happiness rests with himself, who is not dependent on other men or the changes in their fortune, he has the best manner of life." These are the words of Plato [Melanchthon quotes the Greek]: "The man who has procured for himself all the things that bring happiness, or nearly done so, and does not depend on other men, whether some of them fare well or poorly, forced to be in doubt regarding these things—this man has best prepared himself to live." Plato's instruction that we do not pin all our hopes on the fortune of or goodness of or our connections with other men is very true, but when he leads us to consider our own virtues or powers, he is not correct. For he must lead us to God. For many things befall a man where human power without the aid of God will fail. Here God wills that we acknowledge Him and call upon Him, and He promises us help. We discover that this comfort is not some empty rhetoric. But if we call upon Him in our sorrow, as it is written [Ps. 34:18], "The Lord is near to those who are troubled in heart," [He will help].

I have spoken about the causes of our burdens

and about the consolations which we receive, and I have already described the virtue which is called patience or endurance, which the Greeks call *anexikakia,* And this is also necessary, because this obedience has been divinely commanded, and yet there are great advantages which should stir us to agree with this most heartily. When our minds are not strengthened by this virtue, they rush into destruction in various directions, they become angry at God, and they seek help from forbidden sources, as when Saul consulted the witch [cf. 1 Sam. 28], when kings make unjust treaties, and many people moved by the desire for revenge upset the church and empires, as they say Arius did when he was moved to anger at being defeated and then stirred up the church. And our own age sees many examples of the same thing. The desire for revenge is a great fire burning in many people, as in Alcibiades, Coriolanus, and other great men. But let us learn to put the public good ahead of our own individual sorrow and not stir up unnecessary tumults over our own unwillingness to suffer. How far removed from this attitude was the moderation of Scipio, when he could easily have crushed with arms the unjust crimes of the tribunes, and yet he preferred to leave the city rather than destroy the Republic unnecessarily.

And especially we in the church must be concerned about the public peril. Conflicts which are stirred up by the desire for revenge often bring with them horrendous confusions in doctrine and civil wars. We must earnestly avoid these evils and make careful and prudent judgment as to which points we must fight for and which not. We certainly must not fight about our private concerns, nor under the pretext of the public good indulge our private hatreds and malice, but on the other hand we must defend the purity of the true and necessary doctrine with earnestness and determined minds.

Even though philosophy seeks in the abilities and the wills of men the immediate causes for human calamities, yet other principles have been revealed in the church of God, namely, sin in man's nature, and the raging of the devil, who, in order to pour contempt on God, is particularly violent in his attacks against the church.

And although the first causes of all calamities are from this source, yet we need to make a distinction. Just as there is one immediate cause why David is afflicted and driven out of his kingdom (because of his adultery and murder), so there is a different immediate cause for the troubles which Jeremiah endured—he gave up his life in his confession of the truth. Because of this distinction of causes, different kinds of causes for our calamities can be named which I can distinguish by descriptive words, so that the doctrine of the distinction of causes can be more plainly and easily understood. And indeed, this must be understood both for the sake of our comfort and in order to evaluate the disputes regarding satisfactions and other matters.

Therefore, the first classification [in this distinction] must be the retributions (*timoriai*), which are the punishments for particular sins. They certainly are not compensations or satisfactions which merit the remission of guilt or eternal punishment, but are works of divine justice through which God wills that we and others be instructed concerning His righteousness. Their purpose is that we may come to understand what sins are and that God is truly angry at sins, and that He punishes them both in this mortal life and in the future, unless we are converted back to God. To this category pertain most of the calamities which befall the whole human race, because the majority of men do stir up the wrath of God by their frightful sins.

Moreover, because these punishments are the works of the most righteous wrath of God visited upon all nations, yet in the church there are also the promises which are firm and immovable, which God bestows upon us and reveals to us out of His immeasurable mercy. These promises assure us that in the midst of this anger, God still wants us to take refuge in His Son, our mediator, and be saved and obtain eternal life. And often in this mortal life the calamities are taken away or minimized. Thus in Mic. 7[:9] it is written, "I will endure the wrath of the Lord because I have sinned against Him." Here he is plainly speaking about punishment. And yet [in v. 8] he adds the consolation, "When I sit in darkness, the Lord is my light."

And the church learns many things in these punishments. It learns what sins are, it knows the righteous judgment of God and His wrath against sins, and it gives to God the praise of righteousness, as it says in Dan. [9:7], "To You, Lord, belongs righteousness." At the same time, the light of the Gospel is kindled, which teaches us that grace abounds over sin, as it is written to the Romans [cf. Rom 5:15 ff.]. Godly minds learn that God, out of His measureless goodness and mercy, softens His most righteous wrath and puts our salvation ahead of His own indignation. And yet, in order that He might satisfy His righteousness, His anger is laid upon His Son. A comparison of these two things, His righteousness and His mercy, will be the object of our consideration as we study His heavenly wisdom in eternal life. But even now in the very beginning of our training we should give godly thoughts to these things.

The second category is examination (*dokimasiai*), as when, not for particular sins but for the sake of training and strengthening, men are afflicted even though they are pleasing to God and do not have stained consciences, as in the case of Joseph in prison, David's troubles when Saul made a sinister plot against him, and the calamities of Job. For even though there are sins in all the saints in this life, yet there is one immediate cause on account of which God so harshly chastens these instruments of His. He does not will that faith and invocation be quenched by idleness or high living. He wills that in these very troubles our virtues

should grow, so that men may be more vigilant and successful in controlling themselves.

The third category is witness-bearing (*martyrion*) as when for the sake of the confession of the true teaching men are tortured for their worship of God and even killed, as in the case of the death of Abel, the torments of Jeremiah, of Paul, and others who were put to death in their confession of the truth. And yet, in no way are their troubles the punishments for particular sins but testimonies in which they show that they, when they put truth ahead of their life, were so sincere in their belief about God that they kept on teaching, and so truthfully determined that there was nothing false about the doctrine of the Gospel. And they also are testifying that there still remains another life and another judgment after this life. Paul had brought back certain people to life from the dead, and by this example a divinely given testimony was shown that Paul was pleasing to God, and that God had not cast him off, even when he suffered death at the hands of a terrible tyrant. Therefore, there remains a second judgment in which God will bless Paul and punish the work of Nero. And just as the Son of God endured the most bitter torments, so the leading lights of the church suffered frightful troubles so that they might taste the suffering of the Son of God, and likewise Abel, Isaac, and the other patriarchs and the prophets were types foreshadowing the death of Christ.

The fourth category is paying the ransom (*lutron*). This is the obedience of the Son of God alone by means of all of His afflictions and death. For upon Him fell the wrath of the eternal Father against our sins.

It is useful to consider these four different categories by name in order to explain many of the arguments which have arisen.

Locus 19
The Invocation of God, or Prayer

Although we can read many fine writings about other virtues such as moderation and gentleness, it is remarkable that in regard to this highest of all virtues, the invocation of God, not only have there been only a few things handed down to us, but the writings which have been [handed down to us] have been mixed in with corruptions about the invocation of the dead, and have neglected the doctrine of faith, which must shed the greatest light possible on the subject of invocation. Likewise, [these writings] have neglected the distinction between the promise of grace and the promise of physical goods. Thus it is most useful that the church be instructed correctly, carefully, and sufficiently regarding invocation, the work which is proper for the church alone. There are many other virtues, such as moderation and gentleness, which are found also in those who do not know God, as in Pompeus Atticus and others like him. But invocation belongs only to the church and indeed is the chief bastion of the church, as Solomon says [Prov. 18:10], "The name of the Lord is a strong tower," that is, calling upon the true God [is a strong tower].

Now we must note the different kinds of invocation. We seek something from God. This is properly called petition (*petitio*) or prayer (*oratio*). Or we give thanks for a benefit we have received, that is, we bear witness that we have been truly helped by God and we are giving Him thanks, and in recognition of this benefit we are inviting ourselves and others to the fear of God, to faith, and to invocation. Paul often speaks of this kind of invocation, and we are familiar with his words in Phil. 4[:6], "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." Therefore our prayer must not be an empty "vain repetition" or the murmuring of the Gentiles, and we must separate our invocation from that of the Gentiles, the Mohammedans, and the Jews, and learn how God is to be invoked correctly.

In the first place, we must often consider in our invocation what the difference is between true invocation, which the church of God offers, and that of the Gentiles, Mohammedans, and the Jews. Here we need to understand that there are two particular differences: the one concerns the essence of God, and the other, His will as revealed in the promise of His Son, the mediator. As regards the first point, the Gentiles, Mohammedans, and Jews are in error, and those who invoke idols and the dead have also strayed from the true God who has revealed Himself by the giving of His Word and the sending of His Son. The Turks invoke a God, who, as they put it, is the creator of heaven and earth, but they do not want Him to be the true God, the creator of heaven and earth, who has given to us this Word handed down through the prophets and apostles, nor do they agree that Christ is the Son of God. Therefore they deviate from God, as Christ clearly says [John 5:23], "He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father." And God does not will to be known in any way other than how He has revealed Himself—in His Word and through His Son. Thus, as we have said over and over again, we must not imagine any church of the elect except in that group where the Gospel is clearly proclaimed. And this alone is true invocation, because our invocation must be directed to this God who has revealed Himself in the giving of His Word and the sending of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The second distinction is no less necessary. Even if natural reason does confess that there is a God and an eternal mind of measureless power, wisdom, righteousness, and goodness, the creator of things, and even if it confesses that the guilty are punished, yet all of those who are ignorant of the Gospel do not know whether God wills to accept our prayers or why He should receive them. They do not know Christ, the mediator, or the promises [of God]. Further, this is not an invocation which doubts whether God does receive our prayers and does not know why He accepts them. It is insane to murmur, as the prayer of the barbarian king does in Virgil (*Aeneid* 4.208–10): "Do you, O creator, cast the thunderbolts, or do we shudder at blind chance? Is it only empty winds which terrify and confuse us?"

They tell that in Crete there was a statue of Jupiter which had neither eyes nor ears, by which some atheist signified that there is no providence, and that the prayers of men are not heard. In opposition to this evil, our minds need to be instructed that it is necessary to add to our praying the confidence that our prayers are truly heard by God and received for the sake of the Son, our mediator, in accord with His promises.

Thus, we must in our praying use some formula which includes both of these distinctions and which instructs us regarding the persons of the Godhead as well as the promise:

"Almighty, eternal and living God, the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has revealed Yourself in Your measureless goodness and who has proclaimed regarding Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, Hear Him, the creator and preserver of all things, together with Your co-eternal Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Spirit, who was poured out upon the apostles, wise, good, merciful, judge and comforter—be merciful to me for the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, whom You have willed to be a sacrifice for us as our mediator and as a suppliant for us by Your

marvelous and indescribable counsel, so that You show Your measureless wrath against sin and Your measureless mercy toward the human race. Sanctify and guide me by Your Holy Spirit. Preserve and govern Your church and the nations which are the homes of Your churches. Help the efforts of those who are learning the doctrine of the church and all other honorable areas of learning."

This form of prayer will help to teach the person who recites it about the persons of the Godhead, the mediator, and the promises. For when we mention the mediator, then the promises come to mind, as I shall indicate. For you must consider to what God you direct your invocations and where and why He has revealed Himself. Great and indescribable is the blessing of God evident in that He has revealed Himself by such brilliant and certain testimonies, by His Word and the sending of His Son, Jesus Christ. Thus He wills to be known just as He has revealed Himself, and He hears only those and receives them who call upon this revealed God and know the mediator.

There is a sound and learned description in Plato: "God is eternal mind, the cause of good in nature." Someone might ask, "What more is required? Did not Plato know God, that, He exists, that He is eternal, wise, good, and the creator of all good things?" He has not yet said enough, for it is necessary that our minds be led to God as He has revealed Himself, and we must cling to the doctrine of His Son, the mediator.

After showing this distinction, I shall now divide the teaching of the doctrine of invocation into five parts.

First, you must consider what God you are invoking, to what God you turn your mind. For our minds, like those of the Gentiles, wander all over, but as Christ says John 14[:6], "No one comes to the Father but by Me." Remember that He alone is the true God who has revealed Himself from the beginning to His church by the giving of His Word and the sending of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the mediator. Therefore I used above the formula which includes the three persons and the reference to His revelation.

And then we must give consideration to the Word. For a mind which is ignorant of the Word of God will be in doubt whether God wills to be invoked or cares about our groans, or even why He would want to hear us. There seems to be no easier work than invocation. For the Gentiles and the wicked in the church always are reciting some prayers. But when we think about these things, our minds may question whether God cares more about us than about them. We have often fallen, we deserve punishments, we are unworthy of the blessings of God. Against these arguments—by reason of which in many cases invocation languishes, and in others it totally dies—we shall fortify ourselves in the following paragraphs.

Second, there is the precept regarding invocation. Not only are things like murder, theft, and adultery sins, but also it is a very great sin not to render worship to God, not to seek or await help from Him in times of danger, not to give thanks to Him for His benefits. Therefore we must use these precepts in opposition to our unbelief and unworthiness. Whenever there is doubt about whether God wants to be invoked, or is concerned about our groanings, tears, vows, and prayers, direct your attention to these precepts. For whenever He commands us to invoke Him it is helpful to murmur a prayer. If your unworthiness deters you, think what insanity it would be to argue by means of other precepts that we do not want to abstain from stealing or murder because we are not worthy to comply with His will. If the head of a family should command a servant [to do] his legitimate work, he will not accept the excuse from the servant that he is not worthy to obey him.

Thus we should keep these precepts before us at all times. Matt. 7[:7], "Ask and it shall be given to you." And to this is added the universal principle [v. 8], "Everyone who seeks, receives." Luke 18[:1], "We must always pray and not grow weary." Matt. 26[:41], "Watch and pray that you do not enter into temptation." 1 Tim. 2[:1], "I exhort that you say prayers." 1 Thess. 5[:16–18], "Always rejoice, pray without ceasing, in all things give thanks . . . This is the will of God in Christ Jesus toward us." Ps. 50[:15], "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you."

I have spoken about the precept [regarding invocation]. These passages also pertain to the Second Commandment of the Decalogue. And invocation is the work of the Second Commandment and the most important form of worship.

The third point is that as soon as we have considered these precepts, then the godly mind will seek the promises in order to learn whether and why God hears us in our unworthiness when we deserve only the most terrible punishments.

Now let us consider the order of the promises. In the beginning let us take a look at the promise concerning the remission of sins. For it is a true statement that God does not hear sinners, that is, those who do not repent and who do not seek the remission of their sins. Therefore, in every prayer, even when we are going to ask for something else, we should begin with the remission of sins, which has been promised for the sake of Christ. And we should keep in mind such very clear statements as Acts 10[:43], which says, "To Him all the prophets bear witness, that all who believe in Him shall receive the remission of sins through His name." And Rom. 5[:1], "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God."

It is useful to remember the many passages we have gathered above and the many statements regarding justification and repentance, so that we may fix in our minds that this is the constant word of the Gospel from the time when the promise was first given to Adam, that it is a certainty that the remission of sins is given for the sake of Christ, and that in every prayer

we should draw near to God with trust in Christ the mediator, as it says in Eph. 3[:12], "Through Him we have courage to draw near with confidence through faith in Him." And Heb. 4[:14], "Having Jesus as our high priest, let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace."

Now that we have considered the matter of reconciliation, next we shall gather together the promises concerning spiritual and physical blessings. John 16[:23], "Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give to you." "In My name," means mentioning Me, that is, if you ask using My name, the mediator and high priest who intercedes for you. For He commands that we draw near to God with trust in the mediator. And it is said repeatedly, [John 14:6], "No one comes to the Father except through the Son." Luke 11[:13], "How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him." Ps. 50[:15], "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you." John 15[:7], "If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, whatever you wish and ask will be done for you." These words bring the promise to the church in which the word of the Gospel is rightly proclaimed. Therefore it is certain that the church of Christ is that assembly which proclaims the Gospel of God, because He truly hears prayer as long as the church retains the Gospel.

In the same way in Matt. 18[:19–20] it is said about the church, "If two of you agree on earth concerning anything which they ask, it shall be done for them by My heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." Here also a lovely promise is given to the church. Deut. 4[:7], "For what other nation has its gods so near to it as our God is to all who call upon Him?" This passage certainly affirms that [the prayer of] the church where the Word of God is proclaimed is heard. Ps. 145[:18], "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth." He will do what those who fear Him ask and hear their prayers. Is. 65[:24], "Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking, I will hear." Sirach 35[:17], "The prayer of the person who humbles himself shall pierce the clouds . . . and he will not depart until the Most High looks upon him."

What indescribable goodness and mercy God shows to the church which proclaims the word of the Gospel! He commands us to ask for good things, and He adds the most wonderful promises to invite us to call upon Him. But great is the weakness and great is the stupidity of the human mind as it flees from God. Therefore, having been moved by all these precepts and promises, let us curb our doubt and let us begin to draw near to God under the leadership of Christ, and not believe, as the Epicureans do, that these divine promises are only empty sounds. God has not revealed Himself in vain in these glorious testimonies, nor has He set forth his will in vain, for He wills by His own voice to do away with our darkness and our doubts. Thus Tabler is speaking very correctly when he says that the mind of man is never so eager to receive as God is eager to give. For God is true and He keeps His promises.

The fourth point is that in our invocation faith must be added. For the promises are given in order that faith may be kindled. And, as I have said earlier in regard to the order of the promises, we must first understand here that in every invocation, regardless of what is being requested, faith must shine forth, faith which receives the remission of sins and establishes the fact that we do please God and that our prayers are truly heard for the sake of the Son of God, our mediator. Hence, also the testimonies regarding faith which Paul gives, although they also include other external things, yet they also involve this faith. But now, those who do not understand the matter are contending that the statements from Genesis and the prophets have been improperly cited by Paul. For I recall hearing this kind of caviling. But David could not ask for a victory in battle unless he had previously determined that his sins had been remitted, that he had been received by God, and his prayers heard by Him. I have already touched on these matters previously when I spoke about justification.

Then we must distinguish between the things for which we ask. First, we request spiritual blessings, which God has promised specifically that He will give (and He wills that we ask Him without any precondition), such as the remission of sins, deliverance from godlessness and eternal death, and the giving of His Holy Spirit and eternal life. This is the chief promise of the Gospel. Even if all physical benefits are lost, God still wants us to be assured of it, as it says in Rom. 4[:16], "Therefore, it is by faith, freely, that the promise may be certain."

In these prayers, faith supplies no condition because the command of God is unchangeable whereby He commands that we hear Christ and believe the Gospel, so they establish with certainty that, being led to repentances, we are accepted by God for the sake of Christ. Those who do not believe this accuse God of lying. Therefore this is not some condition to be patched on at this point, but we must believe the divine oath [Ezek. 33:11], "As I live, says the Lord, I do not wish the death of the wicked, but that he should turn and live." Saul, although he was often conquered in battles, should not have defected from God, but rather should have taken refuge in Him and sought reconciliation. David, when driven out of his kingdom and all his glory, still did not defect from God. Rather, he knew that reconciliation had been promised and that he had to cling to this promise by faith, even though the whole nature of things was against him. For, although the church is subject to present physical miseries, yet it must not believe that because of these miseries we will be cast off forever, as we have asserted above. 1 Cor. 11[:32],

"But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world." And Christ says [Matt. 5:4], "Blessed are those who mourn."

I have spoken about seeking spiritual blessings, and now I shall speak of physical benefits. Here also, as has been said before, faith in receiving the remission of sins gives light to our way, and it determines that we are pleasing to God and that our prayers are heard for the sake of Christ. We must always in every petition present this faith to God. But regarding these same things we must believe three points: (1) God is truly the giver of these benefits; (2) they do not come to us by mere accident; and (3) they are not produced only by human diligence. Therefore, in order that we may understand that these things are divinely bestowed, God wills that we ask of Him such things as our food, protection, peace, tranquillity, success in the conduct of our calling, and good health. Second, we must believe that God, even if He wills that the church be in subjection under the cross, yet it shall not be destroyed. He wills to give it physical blessings, administration, some degree of hospitable reception, provisions, a defense by those who contend for doctrine, schools, success in its governance, and other necessary things. Third, we must believe that God wills in our physical requests that faith in our reconciliation be exercised and increased.

We should think about all of these things as we pray for physical benefits. And, although we know that the church must be subject to the cross, we must always ask for these things in such a way that at the same time we offer our obedience, so that if God wills, we may be exercised in our faith even longer. Just as David prayed and awaited his return to his kingdom when he was driven out of it by his son, but yet he offered to God his obedience, even if He would not restore it to him. Thus he says [2 Sam. 15:25–26], "If I have found grace in the eyes of the Lord, let Him restore me; but if He says to me, 'You do not please Me,' here I am. Let Him do to me as seems good to Him." And Christ says [Matt. 26:39], "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; but not what I will but what You will, let it be done." And the leper says [Matt. 8:2], "If You will, You can cleanse me." And the three men in Dan. 3[:17–19] say, "Our God, whom we worship, can take us out of here. But if He does not will to do so, be it known to you, O King, that we will not worship your gods." And Paul says [Rom. 8:26], "We do not know what we should pray for as we ought," that is, the flesh, which is indeed pressed down under a burden of afflictions, seeks liberation and it dreads obedience, but the Spirit calls our mind back to obedience. Although it seeks and awaits deliverance, yet it does not fight against the will of God, but wishes to be delivered and at the same time be pleasing to God.

Therefore, since we always pray for the church, or the nation, or the family, or the school, this general faith must be present, as I have said. But in regard to these matters we must believe that God will either deliver us from these calamities about which we are offering our prayer, or He will mitigate them. For while the church in this life is subject to the cross, some troubles will remain, but God diminishes them for the godly who pray to Him. Thus the prophets prayed for mitigation. Jer. 10[:24], "Correct me, but with justice, and not in Your anger." Hab. 3[:2], "Whenever You are angry, O God, recall Your mercy." And Is. 64[:9], "Do not be furious, O Lord."

And in prayer of this kind individuals ought not pray only for themselves, but first of all for the whole body of the church. We should pray that it be preserved, even if individual members must prepare themselves for obedience to bear whatever may come. Thus David in praying for his army asked for victory that the church might be unharmed. In the meantime he knew that some of his men would fall into danger or be killed, and he offered his own obedience. Nor was his prayer in vain, for he was received by God and he sought mitigation of their troubles for many people. Likewise, when we pray that a plague may be taken away, we are not anguishing only about ourselves, but we include the entire church of that place. The prayer for them is heard by God, and it is a certainty that He obtains safety for many people. And God wills that we in our prayer be concerned about other people and about the entire church, as it is written, Ps. 122[:6], "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem."

In Euripides [*Suppliants* 768] when Theseus receives the body of Agamemnon at Thebes and afterwards washes it with his own hands, some of the people wondered why he did not command his servants to do the foul work of washing the corpse. A certain man replied that a person must give up his pride and his unworthy pleasures in the face of calamities which befall the suffering, for in the conduct of our office (*officio*) we must ask, "What shame is there in our brother's troubles?" An example of this most laudable sentiment is seen in Christ. He did not consider it to be a shameful thing to transfer upon Himself the penalties of our iniquities and to be concerned about our miseries [cf. Phil. 2:5–8]; and likewise we individuals should be moved by the troubles which befall the church, the nation, our parents, our children, and our friends. We should pray not only for ourselves but for others, that they might have the strength to endure.

By using it, we must learn to understand what this special faith is called which awaits deliverance or mitigation, that is, the heart which calls upon God in physical miseries must also learn to acquiesce in faith to God. For the more it is a matter of doubt and hesitancy, the more we feel this torment in our heart. Thus faith is brighter in some and more hidden in others. Faith was bright and strong in the woman of Canaan for her daughter. Likewise in the centurion. It was weaker in the father who brought his son, first to the

apostles and later to Christ Himself, for he says in Mark 9[:22 ff.], "If You can do anything, have mercy on us." And afterward with tears he admitted the weakness of his faith and asked to be strengthened: "I believe, Lord, help my unbelief."

We must also learn to recognize the terrors of heart in those who flee from God, even if faith is weak, yet always we must cling to the main point that our prayers are not in vain, that our murmuring is not useless, as the Epicureans and Academicians think. We must govern our minds with the thought that we are considering the distinctions between the promises and the realities. We must know espeically that we must seek reconciliation and believe that we do receive it, that no condition . . . "if it is pleasing to God" should be added. For He expresses His will and commands specifically that we seek reconciliation. Nor should we become distressed over questions about predestination, which I have mentioned above as things which should be set aside. For we must judge concerning the will of God on the basis of His express Word.

Then we must pray specifically regarding our physical torments and ask for either deliverance or mitigation. For this obedience of ours is necessary, since God requires it. However, a prayer is not in vain, for it seeks deliverance or mitigation either for others or for yourself. The prayer of Lawrence in his gridiron was not in vain, since it demonstrated his obedience. For although he was not freed, yet his prayer required great strength. Jonathan, although he was killed by his enemies when he followed after his father in his rejection and his misery, still did not pray in vain for the army and himself. For in the end, that part was victorious which he hoped would prevail, and he was sustained in his anguish by this secret comfort.

Therefore, we must not think that these prayers for physical benefits are spoken in vain, even if the outcome does not always correspond to what we hope. Yet sometimes the outcomes do correspond, as when Hagar asked for a drink for her son [cf. Gen. 21:16 ff.]; when Jacob asked for a protector on his journey so that he would not be overcome by his brother Esau [cf. Gen. 32:9 ff.]; when Moses sought victory praying for his army in battle and placing his hands on a stone [cf. Ex. 17:12]; as Hannah, the infertile mother of Samuel, requested fertility [cf. 1 Sam. 1:11]; as Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, the Maccabees, and many others who prayed for victory; as the Ninevites prayed that their city not be destroyed [cf. Jonah 3:5 ff.]. And there are many examples like this also in the Gospel accounts.

To these stories we must join daily instances of deliverance which the church with her prayers seeks in all ages. How often to you, how often to me, how often to some other person has not God, when asked by us even fearfully, removed or mitigated some great evils! For we must not think that deliverance takes place by accident, as is commonly thought among ungrateful men after they have received some benefit, and then they neglect the helper by which they have been supported. In my own case I know that by the help of God many calamities have been mitigated.

Therefore we must recognize all deliverances, whether of other people about which we have read, or our own which we have experienced, as examples of divine promises. We must be instructed and learn from these promises and examples to call upon God and to seek and await His help. Our faith or confidence must become stronger little by little, and our heart must acquiesce in the hope and expectation of divine aid. And in this practice we must learn this verse Ps. 55[:22]: "Cast all your cares upon God, and He will sustain you. He will never permit the righteous to be moved." God gives physical blessings, such as this life itself, so that the church of God may always remain somewhere on this earth, in order that there may be teachers and learners, so that the doctrine is not destroyed and schools do not perish. If all the apostles had been killed, who would have brought and spread the Gospel in the world? Therefore, God grants the course [of life] to each teacher, and at the same time defends his physical life, supplies a home for him, a nation, a school, and food, just as on one occasion He preserved Paul's ship and finally Paul arrived safely on shore in it [cf. Acts 27]. Thus we should think of the true causes on account of which physical blessings are given to us, so that we may seek them regularly and earnestly as the blessings of God which are necessary for His church.

Two elements exercise our faith as we pray: the method and the time. Moses certainly did not think that he was going to wander in the wilderness for forty years in the midst of his troubles. He had hopes that perhaps the journey would take one month. But many examples teach us that God does deliver us in a different way and at a different time than we had thought or hoped for in our weakness. For He is training us that we should in faith depend on Him and not be dominated by our own notions. Thus in Ps. 4[:4 Vulgate], "The Lord has made His Holy One wonderful," that is, God does not deliver us by human counsels, but in marvelous ways which human wisdom cannot see in advance. Thus also Eph. 3[:20], "God can do what is above what we ask or think." And in reference to the delay, it is often described as in Luke 18[:7] in the story of the unjust judge and the widow. And Hab. 2[:3], "If He delays, keep waiting for Him, because He will come and will not be too late."

Thus it does not belong to us to prescribe for God the manner or the time, but these things should be entirely commended to His counsel, even if for the present our eyes do not see the matter or its outcome clearly, but we must keep our eyes on God and draw near to Him in prayer. A very clear illustration of this principle is found in the story of Judith [8:11–13]. When Judith had learned that the priest had prescribed for God a space of five days to deliver the city, she condemned the priest and said, "Who are you to tempt

God?" This word stirred up her wrath even more, and she said, "You have set a time for God to deliver us."

Thus, as those who are ignorant of the way and the time, we should keep our eyes on God and seek from Him peaceful outcomes for our troubles, as it says in 2 Chron. 20[:12], "Since we do not know what to do, this alone remains for us, that we direct our eyes to You." Since this statement contains so much comfort, it should always be before us in the midst of all our doubts—from which we cannot extricate ourselves by our human wisdom, and so many of which befall a man. Therefore, I shall cite the verses of Joachim Camerarius, by which he paraphrased the statement of King Jehoshaphat [cf. 2 Chron. 20:6–13], in order that these words may instruct us who are interested in this precept. He says, "In the shadows and dense darkness of our mind, when our whole heart has no wisdom at all, in our wandering and disturbance, we turn to You, O God, as the light of our heart, and our faith seeks only our help in our prayers. Rule our actions and our labor by Your counsels, great Father, that our every act of praise may serve You,"

Ps. 37[:5] teaches the same thing: "Commit your way to God and hope in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." A clear example of this is Exodus 14, when Pharaoh, leading the royal army, catches up with the Israelites and seems about to oppress them. The huge crowd of the Israelites was unarmed and hemmed in on one side by the sea and on the other by mountains and thus unable to flee and unable to escape according to any human wisdom. Then Moses cried out [v. 13], "Do not be afraid. Stand and look at the mighty works of God which He will accomplish this day." He commanded them to stand still, that is, not to prescribe the manner to God, not to seek refuge in human fortifications, but to obey God here where they had progressed, and in this obedience calmly to await protection from God, as the statements cited above teach. [Is. 30:15], "In silence and hope is your strength." Again [Ps. 46:10], "Be still and see that I am God."

The fifth point is that we should think about and speak the things which we seek in our prayer. Therefore prayer is the worship of God, because worship attributes this honor to God—that in our great miseries He will bring help to those who call upon Him. His name is not an empty thing, as the Epicureans say in their raving, nor is it tied to secondary causes, as the Stoics teach. And particularly it is not an empty bellowing of words which neither instructs us that our blessings are received from God nor thanks God for the blessings received. The devils, the enemies of God, also know this, and they know with absolute certainty that God is the eternal mind, that He has measureless power, wisdom, righteousness, goodness, and mercy, and that He is the creator of things. But with this knowledge, they are not moved to love God because they do not seek any blessings from Him. Therefore prayer must be sure of the benefit in order that we may acknowledge God as not only being good in Himself but as also being a benefit to us. He demands that this praise be given to Him. And the things to be requested are things not forbidden by God's commandments. Saul should not ask for the destruction of David, nor David that Uriah might be killed. But as it says in 1 John 5[:14], "This is the confidence which we have toward God, that whatever we ask according to His will, He hears us."

We have spoken several times above about the order of our priorities. First of all, it is necessary above all other things that we seek reconciliation. Indeed, they pray in vain for other things if they neglect reconciliation. In vain did David ask for victory, unless at the same time he had sought the remission of sins. Therefore faith shines forth in seeking reconciliation and determining that we are received [by God] for the sake of Christ, something which is above all the other things we pray for. And then we should consider the great weakness we have which attaches both to our mind and our body, so that we must understand that we have great need for God's help. A great majority of people dwell in such great darkness that they consider nothing but their own miseries. Drunken men enjoy their pleasure and their wealth, even while living in great sorrows, and they do not realize that they need God's help. But others who endure troubles that are impossible according to human wisdom, when pressed down under the weight of things, are compelled to seek the help of God, as Isaiah says in 26[:16], "Lord, in trouble they have visited You. They poured out a prayer when Your chastening was upon them."

Therefore we should first consider the dangers of these opinions and moral ideas. So often the greatest men have fallen, men such as Adam, Aaron, David, Peter, and countless others, many of whom did not regain their senses, such as Paul of Samosata, Arius, and others. Not only must we admit our weakness here, but also the devil, the deceiver who "walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" [1 Peter 5:8] must be recognized. The devil weaves an intricate web. Not only does he entangle David and the wife of Uriah in their adultery, but from this beginning he creates the long tragedy and trouble from which David could not extricate himself and in which David finally hoped that he would die, as Saul had perished.

And certainly we must grieve at how great the stupidity of men is, so that, although we see daily examples of the most tragic calamities which have clearly come from the devil, yet we do not carefully fortify ourselves against this savage foe nor against these great dangers by our diligence or by calling upon Christ, our protector. One manifest raging of the devil is the sedition of the Anabaptists in the city of Münster, and the outcome was very sad. But still the minds of men are not moved by the shamefulness of this uproar or by the punishment to cause them to flee the ravings of the Anabaptists. How often the devil stirs up wars which have no real reason! How often he causes great injuries

for individuals when he traps those whom he has deceived by come specious advice at the hands of evil friends! The greatness of the evils with which the devil entraps men, and even the church, cannot be described in words, but in a way it is seen in the history of all ages, and you can observe it even in the examples in our daily life.

The dangers of those evils to our body, reputation, property, children, our churches, our nations—to us and to those who practice hospitality—are more numerous and burdensome than can be included in our prayers. The church always lives like Daniel sitting in the den of lions. Always and from all sides the traps of the devil are set for us, and they catch many. Ungodly men always threaten the church with some atrocity. Always some savage accidents are to be expected. The result is that there are many sudden catastrophes. And it is most correctly said, "All men are hanging by a thin thread, and they fall with any sudden accident which overpowers them" [Ovid, *Epist. ex Ponto* IV, 3, 35 ff.].

Young people who are still ignorant of life imagine that men are born for pleasure and for enjoying revelry, and so they demand and seek these with a mind set on leisure. But those who have tasted our common miseries judge far differently and understand that this whole life is filled with troubles, like a city which is besieged on all sides and attacked sharply by its enemies, which now on this side and now on that side is attacked by the enemy who starts fires, tears down buildings, and can scarcely be held in check. It is a certainty that all wise men wonder why this present and still weak nature of men is burdened down with such great evils, which our nature by its own powers cannot endure.

There is an old saying that each person makes his own fortune, as if to say that fortune is ruled by our own wisdom and that human care can ward off all accidents. But in regard to the universal governance of man, it is manifest that this saying cannot be accepted. Adam was not able to foresee and hinder the crime of his son Cain, nor by his own powers rescue him from the great sorrows which followed the tragedy of his brother. Diligence can contribute something in this common situation in people's lives, in smaller things which depend on our will. Scipio, by his prudence, was the maker of his own fortune in that he did not start a civil war out of his own desire for revenge, as was done later by Marius, Pompey, and Caesar. But there is no doubt that many sad and evil things do befall mankind, which they either cannot foresee, or if they do foresee such things, they still do not guard against the great errors which beset men, because we often make mistakes and foolishly devise good prospects for ourselves, as it is said, "The empty-headed argue with empty words because of their desires." [a saying attributed to Solon]. Finally, after the die has been cast, often such things happen which we cannot bear without the help of God. Adam and David would have succumbed to their sorrows if they had not been sustained by divine help. I have indicated the most important cause of these miseries, which philosophy does not understand, that is to say, that God as a righteous judge is declaring by these testimonies His wrath against the common depravity which inheres in all men and also His wrath against the many crimes of individual people, on account of which common punishments mount.

Human reason argues against this with many disputations which can be summarized thus: For the righteous, things ought to go well. The church is righteous. Therefore, things ought to go well for the church. We must first reply to the minor premise that the church is righteous, that is to say, by imputation and by the beginning of righteousness in this mortal life. But great darkness still inheres in the church, including many doubts about God, and many wicked desires. And there are many signs of the lapses of many people in the church itself, such as Aaron and David, who stirred up the wrath of God. And I have mentioned above that the church is even more oppressed than the rest of the human race, which does not rightly call upon God, because God wills that His wrath against sin be understood particularly in His church. Tiberius and many others like him despised God. Although after this life they are going to pay the penalty, yet in this life they get off more lightly than the church because God wills that His judgment upon the church be seen and feared, as it is written [1 Peter 4:17], "Judgment begins at the house of God." And other instances which I have mentioned above come to mind.

Now I shall reply to the major premise: "For the righteous, things go well." This is in accord with divine order, and thus the Law asserts [Lev. 18:5], "He who does these things shall live by them." Likewise [Deut. 4:1], "This do, and you shall live." Again, Deut. 28[:1, 6], "If you hearken to the voice of the Lord your God and do all of His commands, you will be blessed in your going out and your coming in," that is, in all your civil activities and your domestic life, in wars, in peace, in the procreation of children, in governance and business success, in protecting the purity of the church, in upright behavior, etc. Therefore it is the true voice of the Law and the orderly rule of God that for the righteous there will be righteousness. But the Gospel gives us the interpretation of this rule. For the church is not yet without sins. And since all the good things and all the evils of this life are brief and temporary, God does not will to adorn the righteous with fleeting blessings nor to punish the unrighteous with brief punishments, but rather wills to demonstrate His righteousness in eternal ways. Therefore the chief rewards and the chief punishments He defers to eternity. Meanwhile, in this life He regularly punishes notable crimes with manifest physical penalties, both to admonish us concerning His wrath and eternal judgment, and for the sake of civil peace.

When philosophers, astonished and wondering at this confusion (as they consider it), see here that evils come to good men such as Palamedes and Soc-

rates, while good things come to Tiberius, they ask the reasons for this and try to connect rewards with goodness. Hence, the questions are whether virtue suffices for blessedness, or whether Socrates was blessed, since his reward was not commensurate with his virtue. These questions are unanswerable in philosophy, but they are carefully explained in the church: Paul is blessed because he is pleasing to God and has God as his guardian and ruler. Although he knows that he is held under the cross in this life for various reasons, yet he knows that afterward the church will be adorned not with fleeting blessings nor with good things which endure only for a short time, as is the course of this world. Thus in his time rewards are joined together with virtue, but constant and not fleeting rewards, in the manner of the good things of this mortal life.

I have pointed out this explanation of the argument which is going on among ordinary people, that things should go well for the righteous, in order that the reader might gain some clarification not only about the common question of the philosophers, but also that we might pay closer attention to ourselves and our own miseries, and their causes and cures.

Therefore, whenever you think that you are living in a besieged city which is being sharply attacked on all sides, these very circumstances should instruct you to seek help. And thus the things to be sought, as I have said above, should be included in our prayers, and the order in which they appear should be understood.

In the first place, we must seek the remission of sins and reconciliation, and along with these blessings also the light of the Holy Spirit, who kindles and strengthens in us the knowledge of God, faith, fear, endurance, and love, and finally guides us in our calling and in all our counsels, in teaching and in governing the nation.

In the second place, we should also ask for those physical blessings, both general and individual, such as peace in those places which give refuge to the church and those who desire to be godly, and which provide an orderly life for their citizens. We should also ask such blessings as fertility of the soil, favorable weather, good health, food, success in our endeavors—both civil and domestic, and protection for our children, reputation, and possessions. And the insanity of lazy hypocrites must be utterly destroyed, who say, that it is disgraceful to seek material goods from God. These ravings are filled with godlessness. Indeed, God commands that we pray for physical blessings. He also commands this, as I have said previously, for three very important reasons: the first is that we may acknowledge and determine with certainty that physical blessings are not distributed helter-skelter or by mere accident among men, but that God is truly the giver of them, and that they are given by God to His church, and His church in turn is preserved under His marvelous counsel. God preserves the life of Abraham, Elijah, and Paul, and He is concerned about shelter for the homeless among the enormous dangers in every region, as Christ clearly says. [Matt. 6:32], "Your Father knows what is necessary for you in the protection of your body," and I have already described the promises concerning these blessings.

The second reason why God wants to be asked for these things is so that we may understand that in this life the church will be preserved. How long would Paul keep on teaching if he was going to die immediately? Therefore, in order that he might teach for some period of time, he asked for life, food, and shelter. How can we serve the church of God if our bodies are going to be broken by tortures and sorrows? Therefore, we must pray for tranquillity or the lessening of our miseries, so that we can serve the church. And for this reason, we must understand that God wills to increase His blessings, as is often testified, as when Christ says [Matt. 6:33], "Seek first the kingdom of God . . . and all things shall be added to you."

The third reason is that God wills in these exercises of seeking physical benefits that our faith be strengthened regarding our reconciliation. For in these petitions, our faith in our reconciliation must always shine forth clearly.

I am emphasizing these three reasons in order that we may keep them in mind and that they may urge us to prayer. Chrysostom and many others in a foolish manner corrupted the prayer which Christ taught us when they were unwilling to understand the daily bread as applying to physical bread. Indeed, we need to know that these necessities, of the body, such as life, food, the fruits of the earth and civil government, are great and marvelous works of God, not mere accidents which are spread among men. With definite forethought God bestows these supports for our life upon the church and preserves it.

Nor should we listen to the Stoics, who vigorously assert that since God must be served freely, there is no need to seek physical benefits. These notions come right out of the darkness. These Stoics do not understand how great the weakness of this life is. They [faithful Christians] do not seek these benefits as rewards, as compensations, although such things can be asked for also in their proper place; but they seek them as supports for their calling. Moses could not have governed the people if he had been overwhelmed by mental or physical grief. Therefore, he prayed for life, comfort, and sustenance in order that he could serve in his calling, and yet he served with a free mind. He did not grumble against God, even though he was called out of his regular course of life and even though the great difficulties which occupied his prayers had to be endured.

Whenever we ask in this order that eternal blessings be brought to us in advance, God does not neglect us, even if He defers or does not increase to us the blessings of this life, for this petition is pleasing to God,

and He assures us that He is honored by this form of worship. Nor is there any need for a longer discussion of this matter, for His precepts are well known, His promises are well known, and so are the examples of the greatest of the patriarchs and the prophets. Even though they did not know the philosophy of the Stoics (or better, the Cynics), they did understand that all good things are established by God in a marvelous order, that they are great things which must not be despised, and that we must acknowledge God as the author from whom we should seek life itself and the support and defense for this life.

Jacob, when he had seen the Lord standing on the ladder [Gen. 28], heard the promise which dealt equally with eternal things and physical matters. For He called Jacob and his posterity to establish the church, which could not exist in this life without a place of refuge, without a living and provisions for those who were to teach. In regard to eternal blessings, He said [v.14], "In your seed will all the nations of the earth be blessed." And of the defense of the body He said [v. 15], "I will be your guardian wherever you go." Thus universally we should cling to the argument, as they call it, whenever the divine Word promises that the church of Christ shall remain (and it makes this promise often and clearly); and we should cling also to the context, namely, that at the same time help and refuge is promised for the church. Finally, godlessness and raging can lure away our minds from asking for physical blessings, although God desires to be given this honor and wants our faith to be increased by these exercises of piety.

Therefore, as said above, we must pray in the proper order for both eternal and temporal blessings. Although a prayer may be only a brief groan, it is valuable for both young and old to hold, without any superstition, a form of prayer which is carefully prepared, which addresses the true God and distinguishes our prayer from that of the Gentiles, the Turks, and the Jews, and at the same time instructs us concerning the divine promise and which asks for definite things. The prayers of the first patriarchs and of the people of Israel were of this kind. They carefully distinguished in this prayer between the true God and false gods, and the passages of Scripture by which God reveals Himself demonstrate this point. Sometimes in picturing their struggle they refer in their prayer to the promise, as in Gen. 32[:9–12], where Jacob says, "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord who said to me, 'Return to Your country, and I will deal well with you,' I am not worthy of the least of all Your mercies . . . deliver me from the hand of my brother Esau and let him not smite the mothers with their children. You have said, 'I will surely treat you well.' " There are many prayers of this kind in the Prophets. And it is worthwhile to consider the various parts carefully. The address is, "I call upon You, who were revealed as the true God to my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and I flee to you, not relying on my own worthiness, but upon Your most lovely promises. For I acknowledge that I am in no way worthy of Your mercies, but You have said that You will be my helper." See how he [Jacob] comforts himself and finds rest in the thought of this promise. And then he subjects the thing for which he is asking to the cause, namely, that the church not perish, saying [v. 11], "Defend me so that the mothers and children will not be destroyed."

Often the patriarchs and the prophets pray, "God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," that is, "O God, You who have revealed Yourself by sure testimonies to our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, You have given us the promises." Afterward they used the form given in the Decalogue [Ex. 20:2], "O God, who led Your people Israel out of Egypt." These forms are most commonly repeated in the Psalms. Finally, both the patriarchs and their posterity added a special name to their common calling upon God. Elohim is the common name which the Gentiles used, but Yahweh is the proper and peculiar name by which only the church of the patriarchs and the Israelites addressed God. Thus in Ps.20[:7] it says, "We will call upon the name of Yahweh, our God." And everywhere there are clear examples, and I believe they were in such common usage that these two names were recited by Thomas in John 20[:28], when he says to Christ, "My Lord and my God" (*kyrios* and *theos*).

Therefore we should become accustomed to a familiar form of prayer and utilize a form which has been composed with godliness and learning, free from superstition and magic. We should not recite the hymns of Homer or Callimachus, but under the impulse of our mind take refuge in God through trust in the crucified Christ. And we should direct our mind to that God who is the creator, who has revealed Himself in the sending of His Son, Christ, and by the giving of His Gospel.

Many ignorant, stupid, and self-confident people despise what we have just said. But godly people must be encouraged to accustom themselves, as we have just said, to some definite form of prayer. There are many good reasons for doing so. For the very words we have just spoken are a kind of confession by which the church both privately and publicly separates itself from idols, and each person learns and instructs himself regarding the true God and the true worship of Him. Further, thinking about His revelation and promises stirs up our emotions, and faith becomes stronger when it meditates about how great His goodness is in revealing Himself and in showing how He wills to be invoked, and in giving us the mediator. The many examples He has given constantly demonstrate that He hears those who call upon Him. It is necessary that these emotions of the mind and this faith be stirred up in our prayer. For this a well-expressed form of prayer is beneficial. For "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" [Rom. 10:17]. It is necessary,

therefore, that by meditation on the divine Word our faith be increased.

A certain hermit has said that there is no work more difficult than to speak prayers to God. But no task is considered simpler and more ordinary. But when Christ says [John 4:23], "Those who truly worship will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth," it is easy to understand the difficulty. Let your prayer be in the Spirit, that is, not in hypocrisy, not in babbling of words, but in the godly emotion of the heart, and let it be in truth, that is, in true recognition of God. Let it be directed to the true God and to the mediator. Thus we must concur that there must be true meditation about God, and true emotions of the heart. Thus God has revealed Himself in His Word, in the sending of His Son, that He might be seen in the flesh, that we might look upon the Son in our prayers and be taught about the Father. We must in no wise despise this visible life of the Son of God on earth among us, nor think that He undertook it in vain. God recognized our weakness, and thus He willed to be known in the Son, and He commanded us to see Him revealed in the Son. Thus His life among us was visible, and thus He willed that there be prayers and invocations of this God who sent His Son, whom the eyes of so many could see, who hung on the cross, and who rose from the dead.

But because it is difficult to pay attention while reciting, ignorant people therefore stay away from recitations. But the church has always used them and ordered that they be practiced both in public and in private devotions. It was with this high purpose that the Psalms were composed and given to us. Christ Himself gave a set form for praying, and He mentions it specifically in Luke 11[:2] when He says, "When you pray, say . . . " He prescribes the words and the specific recitation, as John had prescribed earlier. Therefore, we must hold to this and recite the form of prayer which has been given to us by God in His wisdom.

Our Father Who Art in Heaven

This means "You who are everywhere, who sees and hears everything—the almighty creator of all things." But in reciting this part of the prayer the designation "Father" must engage our attention. What God do you call "Father"? Why do you call Him this? Through whom has access to Him been provided for you? Here the words of Christ in John 14[:6] come to mind: "No one comes to the Father but by Me." And again [v. 9], "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." John 16[:23], "Truly, truly I say to you, whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He will give to you." Therefore, you call this God "Father" who has revealed Himself in the sending of His own Son, Christ, and in raising Him from the dead, and in the giving of the Gospel. And you call Him "*our* Father" because He has been placated through the Son and receives our prayers by the intercession of this high priest. Therefore, in order that I may be further instructed, I add these words, "Almighty, eternal and living God, the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who have revealed Yourself in Your measureless goodness and cried out regarding Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, 'Hear Him'; O creator and preserver and helper of all things with Your co-eternal Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who rules with You and who was revealed at Jerusalem, and with Your Holy Spirit who was poured out upon the apostles; O wise, good, merciful judge and comforter—our Father who art in heaven." Thus our prayer is distinguished from that of the Gentiles, the Turks, and the Jews, and our mind is instructed regarding His promises.

Hallowed Be Thy Name

This means, "Work efficaciously in us that You may be truly confessed, that true teachings may be taught through which Your glory will truly reveal that people are truly invoking You and worshiping You." For "Your name" signifies knowledge or recognition and a celebration of the name of God and invocation of Him. Therefore, the thing which we must seek, which is recited at the very beginning of the prayer, is the highest and first good. The First Commandment, and particularly the Second Commandment, instruct us regarding it, namely, that God might become known to us; that the true word of the Gospel about God might be widely and correctly proclaimed and rightly received; and many people might honor God with true invocation and obedience.

Thy Kingdom Come

This petition speaks expressly about the effect of the First Petition. "May You rule us by the proclamation of the word of the Gospel, and by Your Holy Spirit cause us to believe Your Word, and begin in us Your kingdom, so that we may be made heirs of Your kingdom; and may You destroy the reign of the devil, who is horribly working in the human race and constantly driving people into an Epicurean contempt for God or to worship idols, and to commit crimes, murders, lusts, lies, and other terrible things. Defend us against these evils, O eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and rule us by Your Holy Spirit, as You have said [Acts 2:17], 'I shall pour out My Spirit.' "

Thy Will Be Done

This means, "Grant that all on earth may be obedient to You. Grant that the pastors of the church, rulers, magistrates, those who teach and those who learn, and citizens, each in his own station, may perform their duties rightly and joyfully, and that all may be obedient to You, just as the angels in heaven are obedient and pleasing to You. It is Your work to bring it about that we poor, stupid, and weak people do things which are good and salutary, that we may not be instruments of wrath but of mercy, that we may be useful for the church and not be plagues and curses to it. The nation under Hezekiah was happy because of Your help, and under

Zedekiah it was unhappy, because he rejected Your help. We are not rejecting You, but we pray with a true heart and true tears that You will rule our churches, teachers, schools, princes, governors, and people so that they may, in some degree be pleasing to you, as Paul says [Phil. 2:13], 'It is God who works in you to will.' " He brings it about that you accomplish things which are pleasing to Him. For the devils and godless men strive with great raging to do things which are displeasing to God. They stand fast in their Epicurean madness, their idolatry and lusts. They start unjust wars and create vast desolations. But lest the whole human race be created in vain, lest all do things which are displeasing to God, God has called His church, and by His Holy Spirit He leads it so that it does good and pleasing things. It proclaims the true doctrine about God, it hears, it calls upon Him in the right way, it gives thanks to Him, obeys Him, happily draws many away from the devil, governs others with godly and salutary counsel, and preserves peace and honorable instruction.

Thus, up to this point the petitions have involved things which are of the greatest importance and blessings which pertain more to the spirit than to the body, both collectively and individually. An order has been wisely established: first, the true knowledge of God is sought, then the effects of that knowledge, that we might be guided by the Holy Spirit. And third, that each in his own calling or function may perform his duties lawfully and happily. Now follows the petition which refers to physical matters.

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

This means food, peace, protection and good health so that as workers we may be able to carry out our calling, have success in accomplishing things in keeping with our calling, receive education for our children, attain a measure of tranquillity, have shelter, good government, men to protect our good order, our laws, and our judges so that people do not destroy these things by seditions, laxity of discipline, or wars.

And Forgive Us Our Trespasses

We have repeatedly said that in every prayer we must first ask for the remission of sins, and faith regarding our reconciliation must shine forth always in all of our petitions. Always we should begin by looking to our mediator and ask and believe that for His sake we are received by God and heard by Him, and understand that this high priest intercedes for us. In this confidence we should draw near unto God, as is often said, e.g. [Rom. 5:1], "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God and access to Him." Likewise [Heb. 4:14, 16], "Having Jesus as our high priest . . . let us draw near in confidence to the throne of grace." Therefore, although in our prayer our unworthiness always troubles us and frightens us away from God so that with terrified minds we flee from Him, at the same time Christ commands us to seek reconciliation. And He would not command us to seek it unless it was going to be given. Therefore the attentive mind should diligently think about the remission of sins and Christ the mediator. And there is a great confession of the church in these words, for thereby the church confesses that it is surrounded by sins and every kind of infirmity. But comfort is offered here. For since Christ Himself commands us to seek remission, there is surely no doubt that He will grant it. And in this recitation of the petition, the mind at the same time must make a record of the express promises which are given, such as 1 John 1[:8, 9], "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

The words which are added here, "as we forgive those who trespass against us," instruct us about repentance, and that we should not continue in sins against conscience. When the mind retains its contempt for God, it is not heeded by Him, as it says [John 9:31], "God does not hear sinners," that is to say, those who continue in their sins contrary to conscience. And in 1 John 3[:21, 22] it says, "If our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God that we will receive whatever we ask," that is, if we do not continue in sins contrary to conscience. To the same point pertains the statement in Matt. 5[:23], "If you offer your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you . . . " From time to time, the prophets stress the point that we do not please God with our ceremonies and our prayers if we persevere in sins against conscience, as Isaiah 1 and 58 clearly show.

Furthermore, we should consider that it is truly miserable not to be able to flee to God for refuge, not to have God as our protector, our guide, our helper, and to be oppressed by the devil, or to rush into madness because of human errors. All men who cannot call upon God since they continue in sins contrary to conscience are in these great miseries and dangers. Therefore, let us rouse ourselves to repentance and let us amend our lives. But also let us be aware that for the person who is repentant there is remission of his guilt, freely, and for the sake of Christ, as we have often said above.

And Lead Us Not into Temptation

This means, "Do not allow us to be drawn by the devil into impiety and other crimes. Defend us against the traps of the devil. Guide us by Your light and your good counsels. Do not permit us in our deception to fall into errors or be carried away by the weakness of our flesh." Great and marvelous was the wisdom and power of David, yet we often see him pushed one way or another by the devil and by human error, as when he ordered the numbering of the people. Therefore, since the weakness of all people is very great, O eternal God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, rule over us

and show us saving counsels both in individual and public matters, and by Your Holy Spirit strengthen our hearts that they may be obedient to You, and that we may not be instruments of wrath but instruments of mercy and useful to the church.

Deliver Us from Evil

This is a general petition which asks for deliverance from all miseries and troubles of this life, from sins, from the tyranny of the devil, from public and personal calamities. Although the entire church is torn up by present miseries, yet we pray that we may be blessed with light, righteousness, and eternal life, and enjoy the sweetest relationship with the eternal God and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

You see now that the things which we must ask for in the best order of importance, and in the form which He has commanded us to use, includes Christ Himself. For He expressly says that we should speak this way in our praying and He specifies things which are eternal, spiritual, physical, present, and future. He wills that you consider your entire life, yes, and all eternity too, present and future perils. Such consideration must assuredly arouse our minds to prayer and invocation.

But at the very beginning I warn you that you must keep in mind which God you are invoking, and where He has revealed Himself to us, and whether and why He hears us. You must give this careful thought, lest your mind wander as you pray, as the minds of the Gentiles wander. Thus the eternal Son of God has assumed human nature and lived in a familiar way among us, in order that as we pray we might consider that He is the true God, who has revealed Himself to us in the sending of His Son, by manifest testimonies, and that these actions demonstrate that the eternal Father is bearing witness to us concerning His Son. Therefore I have described above the form of this prayer.

O almighty, eternal and living God, eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has revealed Yourself by Your immeasurable kindness and cried out concerning Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, "Hear Him"; Creator, preserver and helper of all things, together with Your co-eternal Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who rules with You and was revealed in Jerusalem, and with Your Holy Spirit, who was poured out upon the apostles; wise, good, merciful judge and defender, You said [Ezek. 33:11], "As I live, I do not desire the death of the sinner, but that he might be turned and live"; and also You have said [Ps. 50:15], "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you." Have mercy on me for the sake of Jesus Christ, Your Son, whom You willed to be made a sacrifice for us as our mediator and protector. Also sanctify and guide me by Your Holy Spirit, guide and defend Your church and those nations which give refuge to Your church.

Here is a proper form to be used in addressing Christ, the Son of God: I call upon You, Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who was crucified for us and rose again, the Word and image of the everlasting Father. You have said [Matt. 11:28], "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Have mercy on me and intercede for me with the eternal Father. Sanctify and guide me by Your Holy Spirit. Defend me against the devils, the lying spirits, and murderers—Your enemies.

This calling upon Christ is a confession of His omnipotence. For he who invokes Him in this way believes that Christ sees the emotions of all the hearts of men and is our almighty protector, who gives His Holy Spirit and aids us in dangers of body and soul. Also, this form of invocation includes the three persons. It addresses the Son and expressly speaks of His intercession before the Father, and it confesses that the Holy Spirit is given by Him.

This kind of express invocation of Christ is found in several places in the writings of the prophets and apostles, for example, Acts 7[:59], "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 1 Thess. 3[:11], "Now may our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way to you." Nor is there any doubt that in Gen. 48[:16] Jacob is preaching about Christ when he says, "May God bless these boys, and may the Angel who has delivered me from all evils also bless them." And Ps. 72[:15], "And they will adore Him forever."

And this form of invocation is a clear testimony which teaches us that Christ is by nature God and omnipotent. But we are not to join to this kind of address the calling upon dead men, for this obscures and corrupts true invocation. But we must hold to the rule [Luke 4:8]: "You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve." It is no light matter to establish the invocation of dead men, since there is no testimony favoring this which has been given us by God, and since it clearly obscures Christ, the mediator, and since the invocation of invisible things attributes to those who are invoked the power of judging the inner movements of our hearts, which is a property belonging only to the nature of one who is omnipotent, as is mentioned in 1 Chron. 28[:9], where it says, "The Lord searches all hearts and understands the thoughts of all minds." And Jer. 17[:10], "I, the Lord, search the hearts."

This honoring of God must not be transferred to the prophets or the apostles or to Mary. And Is. 63[:16] clearly says, "Abraham did not know us." But leaving out the invocation of Mary, the prophets, and apostles, other things can be said which are godly, useful, and worthwhile, such as giving thanks to God that He has revealed Himself through these people, that through them He has given His true teaching to us. And we should consider what kind of teaching it is which they taught as individuals, how they gave thanks, because it is evident that God has given clear testimonies through the deeds of these people, as through the miracles of Moses, Elijah, and Elisha. God has strengthened His church through some of these people by

giving us examples of the mercy which the fallen have received, such as David, Magdalene, and others. He strengthens His church by giving examples which show that our prayers are answered in times of dangers and that we do indeed receive deliverance, as in the case of Hagar when she asked for a drink of water for her son, or when Jacob, David, and Hezekiah prayed for protection. By these examples, we must encourage ourselves to call upon Him, that we may imitate the repentance of these people and their faith. Finally, we should also praise them because they were obedient to God when He called them, and they were anxious and careful to retain the gifts which God had given them. The account is long and filled with godliness concerning these luminaries of the church, concerning the prophets, the apostles, and many other pious people, if their story is told carefully and presented to instruct us to imitate them for our own benefit.

I have added these points briefly, in order that pious readers may disapprove and avoid the invocation of dead men. This is a Gentile practice to invoke many dead gods and dead men who have surpassed others either in power or in the glory of their achievements, men whom they call heroes, such as Hercules, Romulus, and others. There is no doubt that these ravings have come from the devil, who tries to obliterate the knowledge of the true God. Therefore, we should flee these examples which are like the raging of the Gentiles, and rightly learn what has been handed down to us regarding the highest virtue, that is, regarding the invocation of God, in sure and certain testimonies, so that we may invoke and honor gratefully, correctly, and piously the true eternal God, the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ—who was crucified for us and raised again—and the Holy Spirit, who was poured out upon the apostles.

Now, after we have spoken about asking for benefits and help, then we need to learn also about gratitude, as Paul joins these ideas together in 1 Thess. [5:16–18], "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks." But at this point it is necessary that all people confess their guilt. We are all ungrateful to God, and the more peaceful things are, the more we neglect Him in our thinking. Indeed, many people entirely consign God to oblivion under secondary causes, and let down the barriers to their lusts, as the examples of some of the greatest men demonstrate. And experience gives birth to this kind of statement: "Our minds wallow around almost entirely in secondary matters, for it is difficult for a mind which is at ease to suffer pain." [Ovid, *De arte amat.* 2.437 ff.].

Although Sodom had been defended by the manifest blessing of God for the sake of Abraham when the army of the Chaldaeans had been destroyed, as recorded in Genesis [14], yet after this remarkable deliverance the citizens in their sense of false security gave themselves up to debauchery for a few years thereafter, so that because of their shameful crimes, the cities were destroyed by God as a terrible example.

Great and shameful is the ingratitude of all men. We receive from God our life, our reason, our education, our physical support, our learning, the Gospel, the church, and our nation. We are defended and aided, often when we have not even asked for help. Sometimes we play games in our self-security or we seek out pleasure, and we dispute about whether good things come to us by accident. We do not acknowledge God as the giver of them. We are not anxious to keep His blessing, but rather kindle His wrath by our wickedness. We must deplore these evils and amend our ways. Whenever we acknowledge benefits from God, we must confess that we have received them from Him. We must not stubbornly reject God as our guardian and helper, but rather be anxious to please Him and to show our gratitude by our voice and by true piety in our living. For this requires the confession on our part that He should truly be honored, and first we must learn that good things do not come to us by mere accident, but that we really are of concern to Him, that our prayers are heard, and that we are helped by God. Then He also wills that our confession be a testimony among other men regarding His providence. He wills that others be strengthened thereby, so that they may truly believe that human affairs are of concern to God and that the prayers of the church are heard.

Therefore, David in the Psalms very often performs this duty because of the benefits he has received, celebrating the blessings he has been given, as in Ps. 118[:17], "I shall not die but live and declare the works of the Lord," that is, I will celebrate Your benefits and will be a witness of Your true teaching. He really is demanding and magnifying his gratitude toward God. Therefore, although gratitude includes a desire to be obedient, yet we must accustom ourselves daily to a definite use of the words. Many people, when they arise from their bed, when they go to sleep, when they sit down at the table, when they get up from the table, almost like dumb animals do not even think about God, from whom their daily blessings come. This shameful neglect must be condemned and corrected. Every day, before you ask for blessings, think about your previous blessings, and give thanks to God. Then add your new petition, and give a public testimony of your gratitutde, either in writing or by example. You can use this kind of formula:

I thank You, almighty, eternal, and living God, the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, creator, preserver, and helper of all things, together with Your coeternal Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who was revealed in Jerusalem, and with Your Holy Spirit, who was poured out upon the apostles, that You have revealed Yourself to us with Your measureless goodness by sure and certain testimonies, and that You have established and chosen for yourself the church as Your perpetual possession, and that You have willed that Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, be made a sacrifice for us, that

You have given to us Your Gospel and the Holy Spirit, that You have remitted to us our sins and delivered us from the power of the devil and from eternal death, and that You give us eternal life, and already in this life You have bestowed many great blessings upon me, that You have given me life, food, the doctrine, peace in those places where I have dwelt, and that You have mitigated the punishments which I have deserved.

I also thank You, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, crucified and raised again for us, Emmanuel, that You have joined to Yourself a human nature, suffered, and been raised for us, that You have redeemed us, that You preserve and defend Your church against the devil and Your enemies, and that You give and regularly replenish the light of the Gospel, that You forgive our sins and give us eternal life, and that You are our mediator and and tireless intermediary, and that You want to help us, as You have said [Matt. 11:28], "Come to Me, all you who labor, and I will give you rest."

I thank You, O Holy Spirit, our life-giver, who was poured out upon the apostles, that You have kindled Your light in our minds, that You guide, instruct, admonish, and aid me with Your counsel, that You direct the works of my calling and sanctify me to eternal life.

After we have given thanks, then should follow the petition, as indicated above. We should give thanks individually and by name at a particular time for benefits recently received. This enumeration of blessings is a confession of the good things which have happened, something which God certainly commands us to do, and our words should be in keeping with our intention. We must truly believe that danger has not been averted by mere accident, but that we have been preserved by God and aided by Him, and that our prayers have been heard. Our mind must honor God, that He is not a mere empty name, that He does not neglect mankind but truly listens to those in the church who call upon Him, so that there may be a clear distinction between the church and the unbelieving world which curses Christ, because He really does look out for and help His church and keep His promises. We must keep these ideas always before us and remind others of them; we must tell others how we have been aided and delivered, so that they too may be invited to come to the knowledge of God. Gratitude in itself is something which is pleasing to God, and it is required of us for the sake of the example it sets.

Thus Paul in a very beautiful manner gives encouragement that many people should ask for things on their own behalf, but even more give thanks for blessings after they have received them. 2 Corinthians 1, for example, points out that the giving of thanks is a very special sacrifice which is particularly pleasing to God. Many people should do so, because God especially demands that He be acknowledged and honored, particularly since many do celebrate the benefit they have received, that it may be a vivid example and that others may be invited to invocation, fear, and faith. There is a frightful ingratitude in human nature, as the constant complaints of all ages testify, and it is condemned by both divine and human statements. We are morally obligated to show gratitude and yet it is far more common to show gratitude to men than to God.

But ingratitude toward God is worse than ingratitude toward men. Saul, even if he was ungrateful toward David, still could not deny that David deserved much thanks from him. But those who are ungrateful toward God deny that He is the author of their blessings, and devise the notion that dangers have been averted only by accident. Against these dark shadows and this madness, we must fortify our minds by the testimonies of Scripture and come to learn that we truly are regarded, helped, and heard by God. And whenever we are helped, we must acknowledge, confess, and proclaim that God is for us and for others the giver of this blessing, as we have said repeatedly above. Ps. 44[:6], "I will not trust in my bow, nor shall my sword save me." And Christ clearly says [John 15:5], "Without Me you can do nothing." Ps. 34[:6], "This poor man cried to the Lord, and the Lord heard him." Ps. 27[:10], "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take care of me." Ps. 60[:11–12], "Give us help in trouble, for the help of man is in vain. In God we will do valiantly; and He Himself will reduce to nothing those who trouble us." Ps. 127[:1], "Unless the Lord builds the house . . . " Ps. 116[:16–17], "You have loosed my bonds. I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving." Jer. 17[:5, 7], "Cursed is the man who makes flesh his arm . . . blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and the Lord will be his confidence."

It is very difficult for godly minds, even after a blessing has been received, to remember the statement that we are truly helped by God and preserved by Him. But we must strengthen ourselves by means of the testimonies which we have cited above, in order that we may determine that the dangers have been averted from us not by accident but by the help of God, and we must proclaim the blessings of God both to ourselves and to others.

I have made these brief remarks about our principal sacrifice—about our gratitude—in order to instruct the pious reader, who, I pray, will consider these matters carefully and utilize the statements from the prophets and apostles that he may direct his mind to faith, true invocation, and true gratitude. For it is difficult to keep in mind the correct understanding of the presence of God in the midst of our great weakness, even when we see before our eyes manifest testimonies to it. Just as the Israelites in the wilderness, even though they beheld many testimonies to the presence of God, yet constantly fell into doubt about whether they should have been led out of Egypt. The apostles had witnessed the actions of Christ, they had seen people raised from the dead, and yet their weakness of faith was great. Therefore, whenever dangers are diverted from us by

the blessings of God, as often happens, we must keep in sight these statements which will assure us so that we may recognize that God is helping us. Nor should we allow this concept to be forgotten.

Since it is difficult to keep this struggle in our minds, as experience shows and as the Scriptural examples of the Israelites in the wilderness teach, it is appropriate that we be even more diligent in our understanding of these testimonies which have been given to us in the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures, in order that faith and the understanding of the presence of God might be implanted and increase in us. We should keep in mind the confession of Jacob in Gen. 48[:15 f.] when he proclaimed that he had been nurtured and defended by the God of his fathers Abraham and Isaac from his infancy, and he goes on to make mention of the Angel, that is, the Son of God, through whom he says he has been rescued from all evils. Thus also the thanksgiving of David when he was about to die should be an example for us, cf. 2 Kings 22 [2 Sam. 22:18a], "He has delivered me from those who hate me."

We must acknowledge that not all dangers can be averted by human wisdom or protection, as Jeremiah clearly says in ch. 10[:23], "I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself." What inextricable problems befall Moses, Samuel, David, Hezekiah, and ultimately all rulers because of the counsel of men! Therefore, just as these men did, we must ask to be governed and aided by God, and when the outcome is happy, we must confess that whatever the concern is, we have been helped and protected by God. Our present age has also seen examples of this, which it is most appropriate to publish abroad, so that the blessings of God might be celebrated. For example, God has given peace now for many years to our churches. Not only has He given peace and hindered the efforts of our enemies, but He has even suppressed offenses time after time and so restrained to a great degree the zeal and judgments of those who would oppress the churches. As a result, the true doctrine has constantly been taught in our churches. For these great blessings I give thanks to our eternal God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with my whole heart I pray for the sake of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who was crucified and raised again for us, that He would rule over us by His Holy Spirit now and forever. Amen.

Locus 20
Civil Rulers and the Validity of Governmental Matters

Up to this point, I have described the church and set forth the chief teaching it proclaims, which is unknown to human reason, and how the church should call upon God. Now, it is necessary that the church exist among men in their domestic life, their local governments, and their empires, wherever God wills that the confession of the true faith be heard, indeed wherever He wills to gather His church. The church therefore must be located in our domestic environment and in our civil life, and must be taught what to believe concerning marriage and government.

It is also necessary that men be instructed about these matters on the basis of the testimonies of the prophets and apostles—correctly, clearly, and properly. Often, both in ancient times and in modern, there have been superstitious and hypocritical fanatics who have condemned the marriage unions which have been ordained by God and the functions of rulers, judicial systems, civil laws, legitimate punishments, governments, just wars, and the military. In antiquity Marcion spread such ravings, along with the Manichaeans, and their lunacies spread all over Asia and Africa. The Flagelliferi [scourge-bearers, who whipped themselves], as they were called, kept spreading these errors for three hundred years. And in our own time the Anabaptists wander from here to there and still propagate these errors.

Nor has the devil ever quit stirring up troubled minds to adopt false opinions about political matters, because in so doing he can arouse two great evils at the same time. He causes seditions in governments from whence come many unjust murders and destructions; and he obscures the Gospel. For as long as they figure that righteousness is some kind of new barbaric government in which people may live without distinction of ranks and without government, the true light is lost from their inner righteousness which is always in the heart, of which Christ speaks [John 17:3], "This is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and that He whom You have sent," Jesus, is the Christ. And Paul says [Rom. 8:14], "Those who are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God." The righteousness of which the Gospel speaks is the light in the heart which by faith and the knowledge of Christ moves our minds to true invocation of God and to other pious activities which are in agreement with the Law of God and are the beginning of eternal life.

In public life, just as the change of the seasons of the year has been ordained by God, so in civil and governmental matters each person is under subjection in his own station, just as Joseph carried in his heart the true knowledge and worship of God and of the promised mediator, and the beginnings of eternal life. But in public life in the court, in judgment halls, in business matters, in the use of the opportunities at hand, he [Joseph] used the laws of Egypt. Daniel had a similar light in his heart and the beginnings of eternal life, just as Joseph did. But in his life of service to the state, in the court, in the judgment halls, in his business relationships, in his possession of property and in ruling the provinces, he used the laws of the kingdom of Babylon.

This alone must remain inviolate in the secular laws and civil matters, that they not be in conflict with the law of nature, but, as Paul says, they must bring honor to a good work and terror to an evil work [Rom. 13:3]. Then, even if the forms of the law or judgments and penalties have differences, as when we see that some are the laws of feudalism (as they call them), some the laws of Germany, some of France, yet each person in his own location is obedient to them. And this kind of difference has no more to do with the righteousness of the Gospel than the difference in the length of the days and nights. To Paul living in Macedonia, the day at the time of the solstice was longer than for Christ living in Judea. But this difference in no way pertains to the righteousness in the heart of each of them. But the devil seeks to darken the eyes and the minds of people, so that they do not get a glimpse of the true light of the Gospel regarding faith and the knowledge of Christ. So the devil sows these monstrous opinions about this barbaric social order and devises the notion that it is a great virtue not to have property and to abolish law courts and governmental functions. However, these are necessary for the human race and have been ordained by God, that in them our faith may shine forth along with invocation and confession, and that there may be training in the obedience which the Law of God demands and mutual love, as I shall soon describe.

Therefore, in the churches and schools people must be carefully instructed regarding the worthiness of civil matters, and they must be fortified against the ravings of Marcion, the Manichaeans, and the Anabaptists. I realize that uneducated people are moved by the many perversions and confusions which occur in governments, courts, and judgment halls. For princes are often very negligent in their governing. They do not notice the sins and injuries of many people. There are many injustices and slanderers in the court system. There are also many errors committed, many ambitious people in the courts, extortioners and other pests, and many fraudulent contracts. For in this weakness of our

human nature, along with the terrible raging of the devil, who stirs up depraved desires in many rulers, governors, judges, and public servants together with private individuals, it is no wonder that confusion and disorder arise. These things affect minds which have not been previously prepared so that they denounce everything, including the very political order itself, and begin to think that governments are only oppressors of the weak which come from the devil or from human pride and greed.

Often the philosophers also have inquired where governments come from. The facts demonstrate that there is no kingdom which has been established for the human race which is without destruction, none which does not have frightful confusions, none which lasts forever. How much of her own blood and that of strangers did Rome spill before her empire filled the world! By how many civil wars was the empire distracted—wars of Sulla, Marius, Cinna, Caesar, Pompey, Brutus, Anthony, and Augustus, which raged through the entire civilized world. What upsets of law and tranquillity were created! Then came the barbarians, the Goths, the Vandals, the Huns, the Arabs, and the Turks, pouring into Italy, Egypt, Africa, and Asia, until they had utterly destroyed the Roman Empire. And finally, the conditions demonstrated the cry which we hear in Ovid [*Metam.* 15.420–22], "Thus we see everything turned upside down, and other nations taking over the reins, while these nations fall." Again, "And even to those who have reached the heights it is denied to stand there long." And they tell us that Scipio, as he beheld the capture of Carthage and the fire destroying the city, cried bitter tears and said that we must lament the inconstancy of fortune in human affairs. He was not only mourning for Carthage, which had once flourished in power, wealth, and as a great empire, which now he had captured and despoiled and was destroying with fire, but also because he understood the fate of Rome, which on some other day would perish in a similar catastrophe, since no empires last forever. Therefore, the philosophers wondered, if governments really are established by God, why does so much wickedness and misery befall them?

But the teaching of the church has made very important judgments on this matter, and shows the distinction between the political or civil order and the people and the human miseries involved.

In regard to civil order, the heavenly doctrine universally teaches that this order has been instituted by God and is the work of God—whatever good does remain in government. For instance, men are joined together under definite laws and live in a civil society. The people as a whole are governed by rulers, judges, and a system of punishments.The rulers are the ones who maintain discipline and peace and order. The governing offices are distinguished from one another and each is safe in his own place. Business affairs are transacted with lawful contracts for the benefit of the common good and criminals are kept in check and punished by armed force.

Shortly, I shall point out the testimonies from the prophets and apostles which everywhere teach both that the civil order has been established by God and that the goodness which is left in governmental structure is indeed the work of God—not only by His permission, but that it is truly preserved and aided by God, just as the movements of the heavenly bodies and the fertility of the earth are. But before I refer to this distinction between the order and the miseries of the people involved, I will reply to those who ask whence come these great confusions and calamities.

As I have said, the civil order is a good thing. It is beautiful, beneficial for the human race, and is the special work of God. Men who are joined together under laws can live together in a civil society. Much of mankind is governed by rulers who maintain order, carry out judgments, have a concern that the citizens are taught about God, and prohibit Epicurean ravings, idols, perjuries, debaucheries, and physical injuries. Finally, many rulers are concerned that the state be a very good school in which the knowledge of God may shine forth and the works of virtue be encouraged, along with a common defense and sharing of each other's blessings.

You say to me that I am painting a picture of a Platonic ideal. For where was there ever a city in which nothing wicked ever happened? But I am describing this [ideal] city in order that we may distinguish the civil order itself from the faults attached to it. Although there is no city or nation without faults, the governance of one is better and the governance of the other is more disorderly; one retains more of the good according to this ideal, and another less. In the time of David and Solomon, Jerusalem flourished more and its civil order was better than in the time of Herod. Yet whatever good did remain in the time of Herod was the work of God. By the help of God a home was made there for Zachariah, Simeon, Elizabeth, and other holy people. Amidst all the crime, the wars, the raving of Satan and Herod, God still protected Mary, Elizabeth, and countless other saints.

Now I shall say something about the persons involved. Although the matter itself, that is, the political and civil order, is from God, just as marriage is, often the people are not moved by God and make a terrible uproar against the divine order, rather than observe it or adorn it. These are people such as Caligula, Nero, and the many other plagues who infest the empire—which itself has been divinely instituted. They are like wasps in a garden. Paul honored the laws and the good order of the Roman empire, but he hated Nero and cursed him as an instrument of the devil. For it is necessary to distinguish the beneficial rulers of a government from the evil ones. David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Constantine, Theodosius, and Charlemagne were beneficial

princes, divinely raised up and assisted, in order that they might restore the empire and particularly help the church. Others who were divinely raised up and assisted in order that they might restore their government (even if they did not know anything about the church) were such men as Themistocles, Aristides, Alexander of Macedon, Fabius, Marcellus, Scipio, Emilios Paulus, and Augustus. For they governed things with happy results for the human race and they established civil regulations which flourished for a time. Therefore, their labor was helpful in enabling their posterity to continue, and from this posterity the church was gathered.

That good rulers are raised up and helped by God is often testified in the writings of the prophets. Ps. 127[:1], "Unless the Lord guard the city . . . " And Ps. 144[:10], "The One who gives salvation to kings." And Solomon says [Prov. 20:12], "The eye that sees and the ear that hears, God has made them both," that is, that the ruler is alert and that he has counsels, and that the people obey him quickly, these are the works of God. That the counsels of Scipio were good and that the army loved their leader and eagerly followed him, these are blessings of God. Others tried to imitate him, but they were not so successful and their armies were not so eager. Thus also the Baptist, although he was speaking of the governance of the church, enunciated a true principle about governing in general [John 3:27]: "No man can take anything for himself unless it is given him by God," that is, no government will be happy or successful except when God aids it. But the governments of Pericles and Demosthenes were too filled with intrigue; they started unnecessary wars which spelled the destruction of Greece.

But when the substance of the matter and the people involved have been aided by God, then governments flourish more, as when David ruled in Israel and when Augustus ruled in Rome. Yet the government of no man is so tranquil or so happy that many calamities are not mixed in and many evils present. For the devil is also trying to overturn governments in various ways, and the weakness of mankind is very great. Besides, God wills that through the rulers who have been raised up by Him tyrants shall be punished and empires shall rise and fall, and this does not take place without great troubles. The happiest and most trouble-free kingdom was that of Cyrus, and yet the most flourishing part of the world was terribly devastated by his arms, namely, Ionia, for God wished to punish their lustfulness. And, as often as some heroes were raised up, the destructions of great cities and great kingdoms followed, as when Cyrus, Alexander, the Romans, the Goths, and the Turks overturned countless cities and kingdoms.

For this reason, I have said that we must make a distinction between the civil order and the miseries of mankind. The government of David was less peaceful because it was often attacked by the devil, and there were great weaknesses on the part of men. The government of Cyrus was crueler because God willed to punish Ionia by making a terrible example of her because of her flagrant vices. But such awful punishments, even though they seem too severe to us, actually pertain to civil order, because God, the righteous judge, reveals His wrath by these horrendous punishments, just as when He overturned Sodom and when He destroys whole nations by famine or pestilence.

Many evils in governments should be regarded as capital punishments and dreadful examples of the righteous anger of God against the crimes of men. Indeed from the very beginning, governments began to deteriorate and slavery increased because the sins of men increased. The earliest monarchy in the statue in Daniel [chap. 2] was painted gold, the second silver, the third bronze, the fourth iron. And the feet were partly iron and partly clay, that is, in the last era certain governments had become brutalized (as in the case of the Turks), and others became weak, while others were filled with corruption. And the corruption brought more confusion, as the conditions show in many places in Germany.

The kingdom of the Jews in the time of Jehoshaphat was far more attractive than after the return from Babylon. And after that, when it was attacked in many ways by the kings of Syria and Egypt, and finally when Judea was occupied by the Romans, yet some basic civil government still remained. And the godly recognized that this was a blessing from God. Meanwhile, they knew the evils which occurred were divinely permitted as strong punishments, and they bore them with groans and sadness. They endured them with humility and still showed concern in all their work. They did not become stubborn or seditious, but only prayed to God that He would mitigate their bondage.

When they heard that Ptolemy Lathyrus [c. 150 B.C.] had slaughtered 20,000 Jews and forced the captives to eat the flesh of their dead parents and brothers, they recognized that the devil was raving more madly among this people than in other nations, and that they should be concerned about repentance and invocation. Yet they did not understand the divine prophecy that the state would continue until the Messiah should be proclaimed.

I feel that it has been necessary to make these prefatory remarks about the distinction between civil order and the confusions which upset this order (just as if a person upsets the harmony of those who are singing good music correctly by his furious clamor) in order that the reader may be prepared beforehand for other matters and may not despise the divine blessings because of the confusions which come from outside. Sometimes the civil order is better and sometimes it is worse; sometimes there is more confusion and sometimes less. But there are always many great troubles in this wretched and troubled life of ours, both because the devil tries to create major confusions and because

human nature in itself is weak. Because of our nature's errors and lusts, [the devil] easily starts evil activities and upsets our harmony. There are also many great troubles because terrible punishments come upon us which cause great disturbances in governments and good order. These causes are all coming together in this last age of the world.

The weakened nature of men is undoubtedly more feeble than it was in the beginning, in keeping with the way in which learned men divide up the periods of time according to the parts of a man. In the beginning, they say that the head (*to hēgemonikon*) ruled, that is, the rule of reason. For the arts were invented by the first patriarchs, and men were governed by wisdom rather than by force. Then came the age of warfare, in which new governments were being established by force of arms, and there were four empires that ruled the world from the time of Abraham to the age of Theodosius. Then finally followed the period in which they said that the desires dominated. The nature of man became more sluggish and had no interest in wisdom as had once been the case, nor did people take up military arts with any great zeal as had once been the case with brave men such as, David, Achilles, Cyrus, Alexander, Hannibal, Marcellus, Scipio, and Julius Caesar. Rather, the nature of man was weakened and sought only pleasures and delights. Besides, when sins became even more numerous as time passed, so did the punishments. The devil used such occasions and furiously attacked our weak nature. With hatred toward God and Christ, the devil thus rages in his final tyranny, knowing that Christ is going to return in the near future to judge the world visibly. Christ will give eternal blessings to the church and will cast out the devil and the ungodly into eternal torment.

Let us keep these points in mind when we see the confusions of kingdoms, the tumults, the uproars, the ravenous appetites of the princes, the harassments of the people, and the other miseries of bondage on the increase, and let us learn to endure these troubles with a pious mind. Let us pray that in some way God will supply a refuge for His church and rule over it.

All kingdoms in all ages have endured particular turbulence toward the end of their existence. How many rulers in Syria were contending for the power at the same time: Antiochus, Tryphon, Demetrius, and others! How many civil wars took place among the Roman rulers from the time of Severus! They are too numerous to mention. In our own age, we are witnessing the unhappy contentions by the two kings of Pannonia. Thus the wisdom of the church is absolutely necessary in order that we may endure these miseries, about which Christ has forewarned us in His sermons—that in the last days there shall be wars, the ruin of great kingdoms, and the misery of the people.

Now I am returning to the chief point under discussion here, namely, whence do governments come, whether civil offices are good things, and whether Christ permits a ruler to carry out his work regarding buying and selling, maintaining justice, hearing cases in public court or elsewhere, bearing arms, dispelling criminals by force, and waging lawful war. To this question I reply first: both marriage and the civil order are things instituted by God from eternity. They have the express approval of the Word of God, and whatever good remains in the civil order is there by God's help. Furthermore, I call civil order, as I mentioned previously, the lack of unjust disturbances, laws which themselves agree with reason, which unite people in an orderly society, so that certain men are given charge of the general populations, and such matters as contracts, courts, lawful penalties, the repression of criminals, and the right to wage war.

The biblical testimonies concerning marriage are sufficiently well known. Marriage is an unbroken union of husband and wife, instituted by God under certain laws that show which persons are permitted to marry and how this is to be done, as it shows in Gen. 2[:23 ff.], Lev. 18[:6 ff.], Matt. 19[:4 ff.] and 1 Corinthians 7. In these passages the institution, approval, and ordinance of marriage are clearly seen. We shall hear more on these points later. At the moment I shall add testimonies concerning the role of rulers or civil government in marriage.

Paludanus[1] said that civil order has come only from God, because God has placed into man reason and the knowledge of the natural law which judges that this order is necessary among men. Although this is a true statement, he says that it is not a sufficient cause for civil society or for governments. For upright laws and civil society can never be retained only by human counsels and powers. Therefore, we must understand that this order has been established by the Word of God, approved by Him and truly aided by Him. In regard to this Word, the entire law of Moses serves as a clear testimony. Although it was given to one people, it is a witness to the will of God concerning civil life. And there is the moral law, which itself is an order for civil society, if correctly understood. And the same laws have been handed down from the beginning of the world and often repeated. In paradise our wandering lusts were forbidden. In Gen. 4[:10 ff.] unjust murder was forbidden and condemned. In Gen. 9[:6] government was expressly established by the promulgation of this law: "Whosoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, because man was made in the image of God." There is no doubt that this is the cornerstone of civil order, and it is foolish to think that this word did not come from God. And since He says specifically that the blood of a murderer shall be shed by man, He has thus established man as a ruler who, under a definite civil order, shall remove the guilty and administer the judg-

[1] Peter Paludanus (properly De la Palu) of the Dominican Order was made a doctor of the Faculty of Paris in 1317.

ment of God. Thus the testimonies to this institution are present.

And when Paul teaches the doctrine of the civil order in Romans 13 he at the same time is testifying that this order has been established by God and is approved and supported by Him. And this main point has been given to the churches with great wisdom by the Holy Spirit, in order to refute the fanatical ravings of those who condemn the civil order or the concept of rulers and government. These are [v. 1] "powers that have been ordained by God," that is, it is His will that each person in his own time and circumstances shall be obedient to the lawful rulers who are in office. Therefore he says [v. 1], "the powers that be," as if he were saying, "You should not demand the government of Cyrus or of Alexander. God as the righteous judge has overturned these governments long ago and established others. Therefore, know that those that are—that is, those who rule at a particular time—they have been ordained by God to rule." And then he calls governments an ordinance of God. Note the import of this word in that he speaks of governments as ordinances (*ordinationem*). First, he is clearly distinguishing between governments and sins. For sin has not been ordained or established by God. Rather, it is a perversion and frightful overturning of the divine order, something which God always hates and condemns. Then he goes on to instruct us as to the quality of this civil state or rule. It is an order (*ordo*), he says, a series of persons and circumstances which come together according to the rule of the divine mind, and which sheds light in us according to the natural law, as we commonly call it.

Government must be an order among the people. The ruler must lead, and the people must obey, each in his own place. There must be a definite order between husband and wife, between father and children, and there must be an order among judges. The laws establish and give sanctity to the orders among the offices and in business contracts. They show the order of the human race in relationship to God. They prohibit vagrant lusts, which are contrary to the divine order established in human nature. They prescribe fairness in business dealings. How much shall the seller receive, and how much shall he pay? One citizen shall not torment another, but all must know that they are bound together in society for mutual defense and the common good, which consists in equal compensation in matters involving wills, offices, and our property. And if a certain person violates this order, he must be punished.

There is no understanding of this order among beasts, but the knowledge of good order has been ingrafted into man. If man's nature had not been corrupted by sin, also the love of keeping good order toward God and our fellow men would be attached to us as something truly burning in our hearts. But now, as things are, men easily go against this natural order. Some love order more and some less, as Euripides says in his *Cyclops* [*Cyclops* 120, ed. Barnes]: "They are shepherds, and nobody cares for nobody" [the Greek contains a triple negative for emphasis]. Many savage minds think that this is the way for a person to have a beautiful life—not coerced by laws, order, or by discipline, which is like a prison. They want to wander freely and follows their lusts without restraint. It is difficult to persuade such minds that order is a great blessing, or to explain to them what a great thing this arrangement of Paul really is, and how clearly he testifies that civil officers and civil order are good things which are pleasing to God, while sin is not.

There was a law among the Spartans which permitted a man to have relations with another man's wife if the man gave his permission. Therefore if a Spartan were in Judea and should see an adulterous man or woman brought to punishment, he would say that this is a cruelty unworthy of men. But Paul here teaches us that lawful punishments are part of the civil order and that they are in agreement with the norm of the divine mind. But beastly men do not immediately see what Paul is saying, especially since he speaks so briefly.

Therefore, men who are earnest-minded must bring to this statement of Paul their best thinking and they must take time over this passage and carefully discuss what the word "order" (*ordo*) means, and they must distinguish the persons from the substance itself in this order—the rulers from the citizens, the laws from the judgments, the legal contracts from the wrongdoers and the punishments. Then they need to understand that the norm of this order is the eternal law in the mind of God, of which he here says, the ruler rewards good deeds with honor and he punishes evil. And it is absolutely certain that the order is in agreement with the good substance of the divine mind and is pleasing to God. By this, therefore, the testimony of Paul satisfies minds which are alert and well-intentioned. Irenaeus uses the same passage against the fanatics who in the early days of the church were spreading their ravings, which are like those of our Anabaptists. But many of these points are obvious in the writings of the prophets.

Dan. 2[:21], "He removes kingdoms and raises up kingdoms," that is, He causes them to flourish and endure. This is what He calls "to stand." Ps. 127[:1], "Unless the Lord guards the city, they who keep watch over it watch in vain." God is the guardian of the civil state, and therefore He gives it His approval. Ps. 144[:10], "He gives salvation to kings." These words testify that rulers are helped by God. Prov. 8[:16], "By Me princes rule." Prov. 16[:11], "Weight and balances are the just judgment of the Lord." 2 Chron. 19[:6], "You do not judge for man but for the Lord." Is. 1[:17], "Seek justice, reprove the oppressor, defend the widow." God commands the civil order and that each obey it in his own station. Thus, there is no doubt that the civil or political order is approved by Him. And in support of this opinion many statements can be found among the prophets which specifically refer to civil offices.

In Luke 3 the Baptist preaches to the publicans

and the soldiers; and he gives them very important counsel about their civic duty. Thus he gives his approval to this function when he teaches them about correct administration of their work: [v.13], "Collect no more than is your right." Government cannot pay its expenses without collecting taxes. Thus he wants the taxes to be paid, but he does not want lawful taxes to become unbearable extortions. And [v. 14] "Do not intimidate or falsely accuse anyone." He wants justice to be practiced, but without contentions and lying. And finally he adds [v. 14] "Be content with your wages." This entire sermon is an approval of the civil status, the court system, and the military. And he makes a distinction between this order itself and the wickedness or confusions which human malice has mixed in.

The futile, insignificant, and stupid quibblings of the Anabaptists ought to be categorically rejected. They argue that the Baptist permitted these things out of his own imperfections, but that later on Christ taught differently. The sermons of the Baptist and of Christ are not opposed to one another. Nor should we get the idea that the authority of the Baptist is on a lower level. For his calling and office was so great that Christ Himself testifies to him, and God confirms his calling and teaching in a glorious testimony at the baptism of Christ. But the Anabaptists in their raving do not realize what they are saying when they speak contemptuously regarding the ministry of the Baptist.

Ps. 82[:6], "I said, 'You are gods,' " that is, they uphold the divinely established office as the defenders of justice and peace, which are divinely given blessings. God has imparted His own name to the rulers, because it is His will that they bestow with Him these blessings upon the people. Therefore He gives His approval to the office when He calls it a divine office. Ps. 102 [:22], "When the peoples are gathered together and the kings, that they may serve the Lord." Is. 49[:23], "Kings shall be your foster fathers, and queens your nursing mothers." These statements and many more like them bear witness that kings and other rulers are members of the church of God and pleasing to God. Thus God gives His approval to governments and the civil order.

Confirmed by these testimonies, we must be constant in our condemnation of the Anabaptists, who contend that Christians do not have the right to serve as public officers. They disapprove of courts, laws, the military, and the rest of civic order, as if these things are by their very nature sins and in conflict with the Gospel. In my opinion, many contentions have arisen over this dispute, with many people, including Carlstadt, Pelargus, Struthius and others; and many, after getting to know the fountains from which this dispute flows, have returned to the correct way by rejecting the ravings of the Anabaptists.

Further, to these points which I have adduced we need to add some examples—which are very numerous—of people who have truly invoked God, who have governed enormous realms down through the ages. It was the will of God that through some of these supportive people nations might be helped, both so that in their invocation their confession might shine brilliantly and the true doctrine be more widely spread, and so that the church might have a resting place. There is no doubt that our earliest fathers were in this group—men such as Adam, Enoch, and Noah, who were also civil rulers as we learn from the law of Noah [Gen. 9:6] regarding the punishment of murder. Then Melchizedek is expressly called a king. Abraham, although he was a guest in other lands, yet joined certain kings to the church, and ruled with political power over his family and waged war. Later on Joseph not only ruled but also established new laws for the nation of Egypt. Nor is there any doubt that the form of the Egyptian government which was established by Joseph, as long as it flourished, excelled the governmental systems of all other countries which later arose on earth, in Chaldaea, Ionia, Greece, and Rome.

Those people are in serious error who attribute greater political wisdom to Solon or Augustus than was found among the men who were ruling under the guidance of divine light and who were actually calling upon God, such as Joseph, Daniel, Ezra, and others like them. Not only did Joseph rightly call upon God while he was among the princes of Egypt, but as governor he drew to the knowledge of the true God the king who ruled in that era and many others who had positions of authority in the nation. In addition, there is no doubt that Moses and many other rulers among the people of Israel were also pleasing to God.

But when the raving Anabaptists say that this temple and political system was a concession made to the imperfection of the people of Israel, the answer is too easy. It was a singular blessing of God that He bestowed upon His church a certain temple and defended it for more than four hundred years. For it was the will of God that there be a special place in which the testimonies of the divine promises might be made, and in which Christ might be born, as has been amply shown above in regard to the Old Testament. Among the people of Israel He approved a legal and political system, and often bore witness that He required these offices so that among the people invocation might be made and shine forth, and confession and love toward the church might be exercised. He was signifying that He also approved a legal and political order among the Gentiles, that they might set examples. For Joseph, Daniel, and many others had governed political systems among Gentiles. Therefore, we must consider the history of these matters in the case of other kingdoms outside the nation of Israel. Daniel ruled a province of Gentiles and under his administration he turned the leaders of the kingdom to the knowledge of the true God, including the conqueror of Jerusalem—Nebuchadnezzar—and his son Darius the Mede [sic], Cyrus the Persian, and many princes. Therefore God dispersed the people of Israel into other kingdoms here

and there in order that the true doctrine of God might be spread farther. In the Gospel accounts, mention is made of certain centurions who believed the Gospel. The Holy Spirit was even poured out with a marvelous miracle upon the whole household of Cornelius, a Roman soldier, just as He was [poured out] upon the apostles.

We have such sure and clear testimonies and examples which show that civil and political order is pleasing to God, even that the offices in this civil order are filled with men who correctly call upon God that they may do their work in a godly way and carry out the prescribed worship of God. Therefore we must learn to respect civil offices, governments, rulers, laws, courts, the distinction of realms of service, and laws governing business affairs as gifts from God. We must confine all the works of civil life to these boundaries in order that we may be obedient to God in these ordinances and that our invocation and confession may shine like a bright light in this society and that we may practice our love for one another.

I have cited examples of rulers who were pleasing to God such as Joseph, Daniel, Naaman the Syrian, and others. Since it is obvious that they were helped by God, it is manifest that their governance was the work of God. Furthermore, I shall add to this list names of heroes from among the Gentiles who had no true knowledge of God, and yet, lest the human race come to complete destruction, these men were roused by God with sincere motives and were helped in their task of ruling, as was the case with Alexander, Scipio, and Augustus. The remarkable successes in the things such men have done have moved all prudent people to admit that they had better and happier intentions than the rest of mankind in general. Thus Cicero says that there is never a great man without a divine influence. God has grafted these outstanding ideas into such leaders and builders for the establishing of governments and the restoring of civil order and the maintenance of the arts. This clear testimony demonstrates this divine presence in our civil life, as Plato says [*de Legibus* 4, ed. H. Steph. Vol. 2, 713], "Just as cattle are not governed by oxen, or goats by goats, but by a higher nature," namely, by men, "so human nature is too weak to rule over itself. Therefore, God has not placed men over citizens, but higher beings, a superior race of men who are closer to divinity, namely, the heroes, that is to say, people who since they have success for themselves are capable of governing us happily and easily. And they take such care of us that they preserve peace, reverence, and freedom." And he continues, "The saying is true which says that a place which has no god, but is ruled only by mortal men, has no escape from evils and troubles." These words of Plato are absolutely true and wise. His actual words bring the meaning even more clearly to those who understand them [then he cites the Greek]. Examples of this thinking can be supplied from every age. The government of the entire civilized world was peaceful during the reign of Augustus because it was the will of God that—for at least a season—peace, justice, laws, and discipline be restored, and to this end He aided Augustus. Under Valentinian, Augustulus, and people like that new disruptions arose and miseries piled up without measure.

Finally, there is testimony to the presence of God in the life of governments also in this experience: it is clear that atrocious crimes are divinely punished by manifest physical punishments. Things such as perjury, robbery, tyranny, incest, and other things all ultimately bring on punishments. There is too long a list of tyrants who have been killed, as it is written:

[Juvenal, *Satyr,* 10.112 f.], "Few kings descend to the bosom of the earth without murder and bloodshed and the thirsty death of tyrants."

There are examples of murder before us every day. And even when they are sometimes hidden from our eyes, they are finally brought to light in remarkable ways. Although from the very beginning those who have been polluted by committing an unjust killing have escaped the hands of the law, yet finally they are brought to punishment. Punishment follows after those guilty of incest, as in the case of Oedipus, Aegistheus, Herod, and others. Christ speaks of such punishments [Matt. 26:52], "He who takes the sword"—that is, a sword which has not been lawfully granted to him—"shall perish by the sword." Is. 33[:1], "Woe to you who commit robbery, for you in turn shall be despoiled." Job 9[:28], "I am afraid for all of my works, knowing that You will not hold me innocent." Eccl. 8[:8], "The ungodly cannot escape in war," and with other punishments God also punishes wicked crimes. Thus God does indeed regard civil righteousness in the world, that He may regularly punish in this life those who violate it, just as it is regularly cold in winter and hot in summer. Just as in the case of the weather, sometimes God does something outside His rule and in His secret counsel defers punishments and rewards, yet we need to remember this rule and keep our desires within the bounds of the wrath of God.

Now there are two reasons that in this life penalties are regularly assessed against vicious crimes. The first is that God, the righteous judge, wills that His anger against sin be seen and that He may instruct us regarding His will. The second is so that He may protect civil society, which would be immediately and totally destroyed unless robberies, tyrranies, and other madnesses are kept away by Him. Thus even if Tiberius did die a peaceful death, yet for the sake of one or two examples of this kind we should not disregard the rule whereby punishments and torments in this life are threatened to tyrants and others who have polluted themselves with heinous crimes. After the time of Tiberius, then Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Domitian, Commodus and countless others met punishment. The curses have not been placed into the law of God in vain

and the history of the world bears witness that these curses are not empty threats. For in public, entire nations are destroyed by wars and destructions because of the crimes of many people, and in private, many people are tormented daily with great troubles and sorrows. Our consciences must investigate what the causes of these evils are. Isaiah instructs us with a very sad discourse, and in a memorable statement he shows us the cause, as if he were pointing with his finger, in ch. 64[:6], "Our iniquities, like the winds, will blow us away."

This universal experience touches even the Gentiles, so that they recognize the providence of God and His judgment. Isocrates, in his oration *On Peace,* makes a very serious charge against the raving of the Epicureans, who because of a few examples despised this rule and hoped that they might go unpunished for their crimes. Although, he says, those who have been guilty of crimes are not always punished, yet they are very often punished. And since the future is uncertain, for prudent men it is better to understand where this leads. And when you understand that righteousness is more pleasing to God, it would be most foolish to think that righteous people have a worse fortune than the unrighteous. Therefore, since all experience testifies that serious crimes are punished, we must recognize that God is our judge and our vindicator, and we must revere Him and confess that governments are protected by Him, retained, and even changed by Him.

Up to this point, I have cited the statements and the arguments which show that the civil order is a good thing and pleasing to God. To establish this point, the follwing argument will help: as often as God commands that prayers be made for our ruler so that his governance may remain unhampered and be strengthened, it must be a good thing which is pleasing to God and not something sinful. For we must not ask that sinful things be established.

There are also precepts concerning this kind of prayer. [Jer. 29:7], "Pray for the kingdom of Babylon because in its peace will be your peace." He commands that prayers be made for a government which at that time was friendly toward the church. And because of these prayers not only were the burdens of the exile and the bondage eased, but God even turned the heart of the king to recognize the true doctrine. Abraham prayed for King Abimelech, and Jacob blessed the king of Egypt, who had received from Joseph the doctrine of the true worship of God. In 1 Tim. 2[:1–2] the precept given is filled with instruction for us: "I exhort first of all that supplications and the giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." When he commands and teaches in regard to our prayer, he shows what government must be like and what the chief purposes of government are. We must pray that God will give peace to our nations and rule them with discipline. And good princes must perform this kind of work. First, in order that there may be domestic peace and tranquillity, they must protect us from external enemies as well as they can, and at home they must curb crime and sedition. Nor is it the purpose of peace that the citizens can in their laziness seek only pleasures and indulge in laziness. But the ultimate purposes of peace are that the doctrine of the true religion can be spread, that schools may be fostered and children in their tender years be educated, that the church be not even more devastated or the seeds of the church obliterated, and finally, that our morals be governed by honorable discipline.

Thus David in waging war recognized that he was not undertaking and bearing such great burdens for his own sake, so that after it was over he might enjoy his pleasures with an idle and secure mind. Rather, if he could defeat his enemies the church of God might be preserved, and at home he could establish a situation in which children might be brought into the world and rightly taught about God and brought up with good morals, so that the young people could gather in the schools and the people could come to hear sermons in safety. Finally, it was so that the invocation of the true God and the teaching about Him and the name of the Messiah would not be destroyed. David considered these purposes every time he led forth his army, as often as he drew up his battle line, and as often as he attacked the army of the enemy. These purposes were unknown to Alexander, to Scipio, or to Julius Caesar. But they did know that the fatherland had to be protected in order that men might be governed in peace under honorable instruction, so that the whole human race would not perish and our behavior would not become like that of wild animals and barbarians. Thus Paul adds [in 1 Tim. 2:2] that we must pray not only that there may be peace, but also that we live in this peace in a godly and honorable way—that the true doctrine of God be taught and that God be correctly invoked, and that our morals be upright. Thus in a very few words Paul describes the best possible form of civil government.

Now that we have adequately shown that civil order is a blessing which is pleasing to God, I shall add certain useful rules for establishing peace and for nurturing reverence in good minds toward our rulers and the universal order of civil society. This reverence is certainly worthy of the consideration of good minds, and when referred to the glory of God, it is a form of worship which is pleasing to Him.

The first rule. Just as the Gospel neither abolishes nor disapproves of arithmetic, architecture, or the science and art of medicine, so it neither abolishes nor disapproves of the economic or political order. Indeed, it commands us to recognize that these things are gifts of God which this physical life cannot be without. Moreover, since God does not will that the human race be destroyed, but that His church be gathered in this earthly life, He preserves our physical life by these things: food, drink, marriage, the civil order, and the

arts, such as agriculture, architecture, medicine, and physical life.

Thus, just as food, drink, agriculture, architecture, and medicine do not conflict with the Gospel—which makes proclamation concerning our reconciliation with God and the new and enduring light which has been kindled in our minds—likewise, civil governance is not in conflict with the Gospel. But those who do not know the true doctrine of the Gospel regarding our inner righteousness—regarding faith and the true worship of God—such people often get foolish notions in the dispute and imagine for themselves that the Gospel is some new and barbaric political system. Like hypocrites they establish for themselves with great praise a separation from society, along with monastic lifestyles, or an Epicurean slothfulness which those people enjoy who do not want to endure labor for the common good—which goes with the work of governing great and various domains. Nor do they want the dangers and the storms with which rulers are often terribly afflicted, as was the case with Moses, Aaron, Samuel, David, Jeremiah, and the many examples which we see in our daily life.

Nor are the prohibitions against revenge (which we see scattered here and there in the Gospel) to be placed in opposition to this first rule. These prohibitions contains very important and beneficial instruction for governments themselves. God has instituted the order that vengeance is to be carried out by the ruler. Therefore, just as in certain precepts He wills that we do not disregard the divine order, and He prohibits our wandering lusts, so He prohibits our indiscriminate anger. He wills that we be obedient to the divine order and set aside burning hatreds, and pray that the ruler will carry out his duty, defend the innocent, and control and punish wrong-doers. If he does this, we should give thanks both to God and to the ruler, and rejoice that discipline is being properly used and that the nations are at peace. If he does not do this, private citizens should not upset the divine order or start seditions, but restrain their anger and irritation and content themselves with this comfort: they know that the church for certain reasons is being held subject under the cross and yet is still pleasing to God, indeed that enduring injustices and undeserved persecution is a sacrifice which is pleasing to God.

We have said above that vengeance is twofold. One kind has been ordained, that is, public vengeance, which takes place through the ruler according to a definite order, under certain laws. Neither the Gospel nor the law of God forbids this kind of vengeance; indeed, it has already been said repeatedly that it has been divinely instituted and approved by God and is supported by Him. This vengeance is part of the civil order or a part of the function of the rulers, as Paul so correctly calls the ruler the avenger. Just as there is no doubt that in the Gospel the office of ruler is approved, so also it is clear that this vengeance which he carries out according to the laws is likewise approved. This is in agreement with the statement [Heb. 10:30], "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay." God as the righteous judge is angry with sin and He punishes either without human help, as when He destroyed Sodom and the Egyptians in the Red Sea, or He punishes the guilty according to the regular system of punishments which He has given to rulers, as when robbers feel the full force of the severity of civil rulers, or when Cyrus punishes the lustfulness of the Ionians, or Augustus punishes Anthony, who was corrupted by all kinds of lusts and who started a civil war without just cause. These acts of vengeance, and others like them, relate to the statement, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay." This can easily be understood by sane people who demonstrate some intelligence and the ability to make a judgment.

The second kind of vengeance is one which deviates from the divine order, which for the sake of explanation I call private revenge. This is when, in the heat of anger or hatred in our fury, we take up arms without the directives of the laws and serve our own hurt feelings, refusing to endure in other people what God has ordained we should, as when Joab killed Abner in his own personal hatred of him.

Although the heat of anger may be very great and there may be a raving desire for revenge, yet few people are so alert that they recognize that this is their weakness. Most people think up some kind of pretext which they cling to as they start unjust wars and controversies which are dangerous to themselves and to their governments, as in the case of Saul. When he was moved by great jealousy and malice, he complained against David under the pretext that David was rebelling against him. And then, nursing this anger, he tried to destroy a friend who deserved much better at his hands. In the same way Pompey burned with jealousy and tried to destroy Julius.

This is a common disease, one which is found among all races, nations, and families. Therefore godly people must be very concerned and they must see that they do not give way to this kind of anger. There is a well-known and common evil, namely, the love which deviates from the Law of God and is a cause of all kinds of enormous troubles, so that because of this kind of love Troy was overturned by Paris and the Greeks received great difficulties. But anger and the desire for revenge arise from every side. There are many sources, and they produce great wars and wicked uproars both public and private, as the histories of Cain, Saul, Pompey, Arius, and many others show.

When they have considered the greatness of this disease, that is, private revenge which goes against the divine order, prudent men will understand how necessary and beneficial is the precept of Christ in which He repeatedly warns against this impulse. For He Himself truly understood that in the church, and among men in general society, we must avoid these uproars which arise from sources of this kind. Pompey saw that Cae-

sar was increasing in power and he envied his glory, and thus he sought occasions and pretexts to attack him. And other people who were similarly afflicted with the same kind of desires joined him. And I myself have seen many people moved by malice and jealousy who have upset the true teachings in the doctrine of the church.

Finally, all prudent people know that this evil is very widespread. Thus we must impress the statements of Christ and the apostles upon the inmost feelings of our hearts and keep control of our desire for revenge. Since Christ gives His approval to the orderly arrangement for taking vengeance which has been committed to the rulers and on the other hand He forbids private terrorism and seditions, these very words fortify the civil order and give arms to the rulers and show that they are supported and approved by the very precepts of Christ Himself. Therefore those people such as Celsus, Julian and others are advancing false arguments when they criticize the Gospel and write that the Gospel, by forbidding the taking of vengeance, has abolished the concept of public office, discipline, laws, and finally the very foundations of organized society, and has allowed unlimited license for all crimes. Origen and Gregory of Nazianzus responded rather inadequately to this criticism when they did indeed devise some role for taking vengeance, but said that a more perfect virtue was to refrain from taking vengeance. I have referred to these inept statements previously when I spoke about precepts and counsels. And how we must reply to the criticisms of Celcus and Julian can be sufficiently understood from our distinction wherein private vengeance is forbidden but, on the contrary, public vengeance by rulers and governments is commanded. This is a true, godly, and salutary position both for the public and the private aspect of the matter.

Therefore governments are strengthened and adorned by the Word of the Gospel. It is a very wonderful order which God has instituted, both in our private lives and in governments in regard to all actions in general. But human minds are often so occupied with absurd conjectures, hypocrisy, perverse examples, and finally, so misguided by the devil, that they do not know how to follow the divine order. Thus we see many people, such as the Anabaptists, who in this matter defend their ravings with amazing tenacity, even when they are clearly refuted. For there is no lack of clarity in this matter, if only they will apply a teachable mind to it. However, I have discussed this matter (perhaps at too great a length) in order to instruct the young people to accustom their minds to respecting the civil order and, having been thus admonished, to recognize that in it is found the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God toward the human race. It is customary for young people to show the "brilliance" of their minds by criticizing the laws and the customs of society. But we need to understand that this cynical wisdom and petulance should be avoided and detested.

The objection is also made here that often governments are rapacious and that incompetent people are in power, and that there is much wickedness and confusion in governments. On the basis of this kind of argument, fanatic spirits conclude that government is universally an evil thing and has been condemned by God.

To this you should reply that it is an untrue and weak argument simply to draw this conclusion [*a dicto secundum quid ad dictum*]. This is like saying that because in procreation there are many sinful desires involved, therefore procreation is universally condemned by God. I previously warned that the civil order must be distinguished from the confusions which are mixed in with it from all sides, partly from the devil, partly from the wickedness of men, and partly from the common weakness of mankind, lest we conclude that in this life, in all generations of men and in all governments, these confusions have been ordained by God.

No one doubts that ecclesiastical government has been instituted by God. But how much confusion comes from other places! And yet the word of the Gospel is efficacious and gathers the eternal church to God, both to hear Him and to worship Him. Add to this the example of marriage and procreation. All sane people confess that marriage has been instituted by God and is pleasing to Him and that procreation is aided by Him, as it is written [Acts 17:28], "In Him we live and move and have our being." But how many cruel husbands there are, how many fathers who neglect their children—men who are without natural affection and who are not concerned that children are to be taught the knowledge of God! These sins which arise from different quarters must be distinguished from the order of marriage and from procreation. We must flee the ravings of the Manichaeans and the Anabaptists, and learn to attribute to God the things which have been truly established and ordered by Him. They are very beneficial when they are separated from the sinful vices which arise not from God but from the devil and the maliciousness and weakness of men. And in regard to these things, we must cling to the consolations which have been given us by God. Godly people are being oppressed either by the tyranny of the Turks, or by other governments which are departing from lawful care for their people. Those godly people must be instructed as to what the miseries are and how they are to be endured and what commands they must refuse to obey.

Particularly our times require that good minds be instructed to recognize that in this last age of the world governments are going to encounter greater confusions than there were at the beginning of the world, as the statues in Daniel [2] show, in which the first government was gold, the second silver, the third bronze, the fourth iron. The feet were partly iron and partly clay. Thus there will be less power for good. And experience moved Plato to say that there is a certain time for each city and each kingdom when their nature does not prog-

ress beyond a certain point. When the perfect number is established, it has reached the goal, so that the cubes do not follow, so that after 6 the number 18 is established, and the cubes do not follow.[2]

Indeed Plato attributes this statement to the Muses, because he believes that the main cause of the changes in kingdoms is not the crimes of men, but the secret and fatal order of nature which in various ways is mixed in with matter. But the heavenly doctrine cries out over and over again that the ruin of kingdoms is brought about by human ragings, and the punishments are frightful, as it is written in Sirach 10[:8], "A kingdom is transferred from one nation to another because of the injustice and injuries of men." I am responding in this way to the objection which I have referred to briefly, in order that when the godly have been instructed they may distinguish the order instituted by God from the confusions which come from elsewhere, and may learn to bear wisely the bondage which is a punishment like a prison for human desires.

The second rule. It is admitted indeed that Christians do perform works in the household and in government, and it is necessary that they fulfill the duties of civil life in accordance with their calling. And since the godly are put in charge of these duties so that they may be obedient to God, these duties are pleasing to Him and they are the worship of God and involve many virtues. Thus the Christian acts rightly and in a godly manner when in keeping with his calling he serves as a public official, serves as a judge or a soldier, makes accusations in court against those who are doing harm, pleads cases, or executes lawful punishments against those who have been found guilty. It is necessary that rulers and judges who do not despise God understand these things.

First the testimonies regarding this necessity are clear, namely, that it is necessary the the citizens and those who truly believe the Gospel to carry out civil duties in keeping with their calling. Rom. 13[:5], "It is necessary to be obedient not only for the sake of wrath but also for the sake of conscience." Luke 3[:14], "Do not intimidate anyone, or falsely accuse [anyone], and be content with your wages." Is. 1[:17], "Seek justice, reprove the oppressor, defend the widow." The careful reader will note similar passages in other places, for these precepts are often repeated.

And the prophets often instruct us that these actions are the worship of God. For they are attacking superstition which believes that only ceremonies are the worship of God and which overlooks negligence in our public duties. Indeed the monks thought that domestic and civil life were really not pleasing to God. But the prophets gave priority to the public duties over the ceremonies and affirmed that rewards were promised for performing them. Is. 1[:11, 17] "I do not want your burnt offerings . . . but seek justice and reprove the oppressor." Is. 58[:17], "Break bread for the hungry." Micah 6[:7–8], "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams? I will show you, O man, what is good . . . to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." Zech. 7[:6 f.], "When you eat and when you drink, do you not eat for yourselves?" [Verses 9–10], "Thus says the Lord, 'Execute true justice . . . do not oppress the widow or the fatherless or the poor.' "

The dignity of these works is better understood when we consider the civil order and the reason for this order itself. God has established the human race for a life in society, and He has willed that the bond which binds this society together is procreation, education, governance, legal relationships, and the arts and sciences. A man does not beget a child by himself, nor does a woman, nor does a child, when it has been born, manage to stay alive without help from someone else. Thus the nature of the human race is joined together by eternal bonds. But to what particular end? To this end, that for the procreation and education or upbringing of a child there is need for a society, and there is need for teaching this in a group. God wills to be recognized and worshiped, with the result that some must teach others about God and other good things, and therefore He placed man in society, the bonds of which are rulers, laws, and public offices.

First we must pledge our obedience to God in obedience to these rulers.

Second, our confession must shine forth in society. For in this way we have been particularly placed in society, in order that the knowledge of God and of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, might be spread far and wide. Show what you believe about God, and you will bear witness that you are confessing the truth and doing righteous things for the sake of God's judgment.

Third, our domestic and our civil lives are filled with troubles and great perils. For he is an iron man who does not consider the dangers involved with bearing children and bringing them up, to which we add the great mountains of concerns which are in the courts and in the military camps! Yet in these miseries and dangers, faith and invocation do shine brilliantly. For our poor weak human nature is burdened down with such difficulties, that when we have been instructed regarding faith and prayer, we must spread the knowledge of God. Therefore, domestic work and civil service are acts of worship toward God, because they serve to the end that obedience be rendered to God, and because with these works worship of God must be in-

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[2] The Latin is difficult. Melanchthon appears to be discussing the "perfect number" Plato describes in *Republic* 546–47. Plato too is discussing the demise of cities and kingdoms. While scholars disagree on the interpretation of this "perfect number," one possibility is that it is $216 = 3^3 + 4^3 + 5^3 = 6^3$. Melanchthon is then arguing that this equation does not work for numbers higher than 6. (In fact, $a^3 + b^3 + c^3 = d^3$ does not work for any other consecutive numbers.) Plato may also be referring to triangles. Melanchthon's point is that this "perfect number" cannot explain the rise and fall of kingdoms.

cluded. Thus when David was about to wage war, and when Solomon was beginning his rule, they called upon God, and in Ps. 20[:7], said, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will call upon the name of the Lord our God."

Fourth, in these works we demonstrate love toward our neighbor and endurance and godliness in keeping possession of the doctrine of God. Thus many virtues are included in our domestic and civil works, on account of which they become sacrifices or worship of God, that is, works by which God judges that He is being given honor.

What did David do while he was waging battle? First, he recognized that he owed obedience to God in his vocation, that is, in the level in society in which he had been placed. Second, he confessed that he was a citizen of the people of Israel and that he was calling upon the eternal God who had revealed Himself and had given His Word to the Israelites with sure testimonies. Third, in time of danger he exercised his faith and called upon God.

Further, he served at his civil duty. Indeed, he contended for those walls within which sat the boys and girls who were learning to read the prophets, that the heavenly doctrine might be preserved and spread. In the meanwhile, how many other virtues such as justice, endurance, fitness to rule, and other characteristics are necessary for for a governor! Fifth, to these virtues which I have mentioned, add in these labors another very important thing, namely, the testimony of the presence of God, by which faith and reverence might be strengthened. We see the robbers and tyrants punished. We are aware that God is protecting governments which act as havens of refuge for the church. Josiah and Hezekiah, when they were ruling, learned that their prayers for the nation were heard. David testifies that God was present with the rulers, as he says [Ps. 18:34], "Blessed be God who has taught my hands to make war." Again [Ps. 144:10], "The One who gives salvation to kings."

These causes and these purposes for domestic labors and civil duties are to be considered often by godly people, and they must compare civil life with that of the monks, and godly rulers with ungodly.

The cause which demands obedience in our civil duty is God Himself. Here we should mention the efficient cause. The final cause, or the purpose, is that our confession may shine forth in society. A joint contributing cause is faith which seeks guidance in time of struggle and peril. The more remote purposes are that our neighbor may be served, and that the possession of the heavenly doctrine may be defended. The effect is the testimonies of the presence of God, which increases our fear and our faith. A knowledge of these causes and effects is a blessing to any age, both as it applies to the civil life and to godly people. It is comfort in this multitude of burdens, and it arouses in our minds the fear of God and faith in Him.

Now compare David and a hermit. The hermit flees from the battle line and from civil order, and he is not showing the obedience to God which he owes to human society. He flees out into the deserts so that he may avoid the works, the dangers, the uncertain outcomes of daily life, injuries, ingratitude, and finally a mountain of concerns and sorrows. Thus at the same time he flees from the exercises of faith, invocation, and confession; he does not serve his neighbor, he does not teach others, nor does he make any effort to retain the doctrine. What kind of life is this? How are the arts and sciences developed or spread? How does procreation of the race take place? Where is the protection of the poor and the children? Do all good men want to be hermits? Therefore we must reject this kind of lifestyle, which neglects the obedience we owe to God in helping and guarding our human life together.

Here compare the godly soldier and the worldly one. When Celsus criticized the Gospel for prohibiting the taking of vengeance and said that the Gospel forbade serving in the military, Origen replied that the purpose of a Christian army was to pray for the empire. And although Origen was correct in his reply concerning a part of our duties, yet he did not say enough. He should have included more. The Christian fights in the battle line in keeping with his calling or vocation, and he strengthens his weapons by calling upon God, just as David, when he was about to go against Goliath, equipped himself with his prayers and his sling. Thus the Christian soldier is better equipped than the unbeliever. Furthermore, their goals are different. David waged war to defend the heavenly doctrine, while Julius Caesar waged war to defend his dignity. In the same way, Josiah was better equipped than Cicero. Cicero brought to his governorship only his own counsels, wisdom, and diligence, but Josiah brought his prayers and his wisdom, and often cried [to God], as it is written in 2 Chron. 20[:12], "When we do not know what to do, we turn our eyes to You."

I have spoken briefly about the second rule, which godly readers should carefully study, in order that they may learn to understand the dignity of civil life and to consider what the difference is between a godly civil life and an ungodly one.

The third rule. The Gospel does not prescribe that our civil life should be governed by the civil laws of Moses, nor does the Gospel establish any kind of new physical political arrangement, but it commands us to be obedient to the present laws and rulers, as long as they are not in conflict with the laws of nature, and it commands that we be zealous in following our rulers and honoring them. For Paul says this very clearly [Rom. 13:1], "Let every soul be subject to the power which is in charge," that is, let a person be obedient to the power which is presently in charge. I have cited this rule because many people remember Monetarius, Struthius, and others who contended that Christians ought to handle civil court cases on the basis of the Mosaic

law, and that the Roman law which now is in use in our civil courts ought to be abolished. What else would this be except the restoration of the Mosaic civil law which God has utterly destroyed as a terrible example in order that He might show that it need not be perpetual?

It is often said that the Gospel speaks of spiritual and eternal righteousness, as Paul says [2 Cor. 3:8], "The Gospel is the ministration of the Spirit," but it has not established a definite physical form of government, but permits us to use the different forms from the Gentiles or nations, just as there are different spaces of time—only that the laws not be in conflict with the laws of nature, but give approval to honorable actions and punish wickedness. For the Christian judge must follow this rule which Paul also cites in Rom. 13 [:2 ff.]: "The magistrate gives honor to those who act properly, and he punishes those who do wrong." But the law of nature judges what acts are honorable and what things are evil in our morals.

Furthermore, it is of no interest to the church that the laws of France regarding punishments, divisions of inheritances, or successions are different from the laws of Germany. The Christian in Armenia uses the civil laws of that nation, but in the city of Venice he uses the Venetian laws. Remember, those of you who do not want any thieves to be punished with the death penalty, that the law of Moses punished theft in four different ways. The ancient laws punished a highway robber with death, and for this reason certain people defended themselves very wisely by the use of the law, because in those barbarous countries many of the thieves were wandering about armed with spears and with the intention of doing harm as thieves.

Yet the Christian judge should also consider this, that it is sufficient if the law is in agreement with the rule that the judge is to punish evil actions. He is to consider that for those who make the laws there are to be degrees of permissibility whereby thieves would be more severely punished in those nations where discipline was laxer than in other areas where there were many more bonds of discipline. Nor does God disapprove of severity, because there is no doubt that our sins merit death under the judgment of God. The law of Moses wills that a gluttonous and disobedient son be brought before the judges and condemned to death. That law is most honorable, sad to say, which shows that severity of discipline is pleasing to God. I am omitting here a longer discussion of this matter, for I have covered only the points on which the unlearned need to be instructed lest they be upset by the clamors of those who again are contending that the laws of Moses ought to be reintroduced in the courts and the Roman law abolished.

Regarding the well-known overzealousness which is part of the natural disposition of young people, they [the young people] contend that the ancient instruction was mediocre, while the new laws permit a better order of acquiring education to be prescribed for the judges, that they govern the law courts as with the edicts of the aediles, and that they establish prices for things which are put on sale (as I recall Mustela teaching in the halls of learning in regard to the methods of education). Now I am not condemning the diligence of wise rulers, but this youthful overzealousness needs to be held in check, especially for those who carry out the office of the ministry of the Gospel. They should propose the teaching regarding the correct invocation of God and the definite duties of piety. But it is the province of judges and the court to understand that the art of governing has been put in the hands of various experts, and they should bear in mind the well-known precepts that each man should adorn his own Sparta. Thus, in Aristophanes, Cleon is said to have one foot in the court and the other in the camp, and likewise those noisy people have one foot in the church and the other in the courts.

In the meantime, as a result of this, they are establishing a state, just as the monkey did in the fable of Hermogenes. The monkey was captured on one occasion by some men. He saw the cities, the houses, the meetings of people, the theaters, the games, and the shows. When he returned to the other monkeys and told them about what he had seen, he urged them to build houses in imitation of men by which they might protect themselves against storms, and add walls for protection against lions, wolves, and men. Not only was this useful idea proposed, but he also made special mention of the theaters and the games. The idea of imitating these things seemed to meet with great pleasure. Therefore they held a council. The chief monkeys sent out the younger ones to cut timber and gather stones. But the monkeys disliked this foolishness. They had no axes and they had no way of either cutting the timber or collecting the stones, and, finally, they were totally lacking in the science of architecture. Thus, the situation compelled them to give up what they had so foolishly undertaken.

We see many such architects in our society today, like Struthius, Mustela, and others. Therefore wiser people should remember the precept in this third rule which has been given to us, and we should not rashly contend for political structures which contain manifest foolishness.

The fourth rule. The doctrine of the Gospel gives such serious command regarding obedience that it affirms it is a mortal sin to disobey the commands of lawful rulers, so long as they do not order us to act contrary to the commands of God.

This rule is expressly taught in Rom. 13[:5]: "We must obey not only because of wrath but also for the sake of conscience." First, it teaches that it is a necessary work, and then it explains what the necessity is. "Not only because of wrath," it says, that is, because of the fear of physical punishment with which the ruler afflicts the contumacious, "but also for the sake of conscience" it is necessary to obey. Therefore, it testifies

that God is offended by stubbornness and that the conscience is rendered guilty because God insistently demands obedience.

Here consider how great an evil it is that our conscience be declared guilty before God, that a man be deserted and no longer guided or defended by Him, but subject to the punishment of eternal wrath after this life unless he repents. For God keeps this rule: He punishes the wicked refusal to repent even in this life with frightful examples of His wrath, as the stories of Absalom, Shimei, Joab, and countless others show. Here the prudent reader should compare the political views of the philosophers with this statement of Paul. What writings of the philosophers support the civil order and peace as does the text from Paul? This is a very strong wall of support for public officials. For the minds of all good men and even ordinary men should judge that they are compelled to give honor and obedience not by fear or by the power of the rulers but by this heavenly doctrine, so that they respect governments and reverently obey the voice of the law and the rulers.

And the laws of governments demand only outward obedience in war and peace, physical labors, the payment of taxes, and just outward fulfillment of our duties in the total civil environment. But the heavenly doctrine demands much more. It commands us to honor the ruler. This is the highest degree of obedience—not only that we do our outward civil duties, but that we have honorable thoughts and good will in our minds. For these two concepts are meant by the word *honor.* A respectful attitude involves the idea that the entire civil order—governments and rulers—are things which have been instituted by God and approved by Him and defended by divine power, and that God wills that the human race be governed and restrained by this form of civil life. And in the very act of governing, we can see many examples of His judgment regarding the wickedness of men, as the punishments of murderers, incestuous persons, tyrants, and perjurers clearly testify to God's wrath against sins. Therefore it is an attitude of honor to regard the civil order, governments, public offices, laws and the legal system, and punishments as works of God in which the wisdom of God, righteousness, and goodness toward the human race are to be seen. The other part of this honoring is that these things are divinely established, and our will should be completely subject with genuine eagerness to our governments for the sake of God, and should love these things and our rulers themselves as guardians of civil order. This is the meaning of this precept in which he commands us to show honor to our rulers.

I have stated above that we must distinguish between the matter itself and the people involved. Paul recognized and certainly knew that the Roman empire had been established by God with His particular counsel and help, and he respected and honored this order and the laws, but he despised and execrated Nero as a loathsome disease and an instrument of the devil, a person whom he prayed God to remove, as also did happen. Paul was killed by him first, with the unspeakable counsel of God permitting it so that by such a loathsome, shameful, and execrable portent, the apostle, who was so dear to God and adorned by Him with such glorious gifts and through whom the great part of the church was gathered, was put to death. Yet in the same year Nero met death at His hands.

But this is an outstanding honor—to be able to call upon God on behalf of our government and our rulers, that they will do their work with enthusiasm and recognize that the civil order is a work and gift of God and that good rulers are raised up by God and aided by Him, as is indeed the case. For no governments or civilizations will endure unless God raises up people who will maintain them, as when Josiah restored the kingdom after the collapse of things after Manasseh. They must consider these benefits as coming from God and must aid their government by their fervent and sincere prayers, as Paul commands us in 1 Tim. 2[:2]: "I exhort that prayers be made for kings and all who are in authority." And the purpose of these prayers is added, "that we may live a peaceable life," so that we do not wallow in idle pleasures, but control our morals; and that the Gospel can be taught and spread, the churches increase, and the name of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ be honored. Jeremiah also commanded in ch. 29[:7] that prayer be offered for the kingdom of Babylon: "Seek the peace of the city in which you will be in exile, and pray to the Lord for it, for in its peace you will have peace."

I am adding also this rule, which has been given to us by the voice of the apostles [Acts 5:29]: "We must obey God rather than men." Thus when men, whether kings or priests, command that we do something which is contrary to the commands of God, we must not obey, but give priority to the command of God, as the story in Daniel 3 teaches us.

I have set forth the main points which we need to know in the church regarding the causes and worthiness of the civil order and rulers. Now many things should also be said regarding the duties of rulers, but it is not our purpose to cover the whole subject of the civil order. There are books by philosophers and lawyers which contain the duties of rulers. However, we shall only briefly summarize the matter. Aristotle has given us a learned definition of the office of ruler in a very brief statement, which still contains the kernel of the entire teaching: "The ruler is the guardian of the law." When you ask, "What are the duties of the ruler?" Keep in mind this definition and picture to yourself the ruler from whose neck hang the two tables of the Mosaic law. The guardian of these must be a civil ruler, because his office pertains to external discipline. For these tables are the sum and substance of the law, the sources from which all other honest laws are derived (for it is necessary that there be more laws which govern our civil and societal life).

Therefore, since the ruler is the guardian of these laws, he must himself be obedient to them and compel others to obey also and to defend their authority with all his might. It is for this reason that he is armed by God with the sword. And in order that we may understand the distinction between ecclesiastical and civil governance, and that at the same time their respective duties may be observed, I am giving this definition of a civil ruler: A ruler is a servant of God who keeps watch over the honorable external discipline and peace of the group he governs, who controls and punishes the refractory by means of lawful physical punishments.

Here we should compare the differences between the teacher of the Gospel and the civil ruler. The teacher of the Gospel sets forth the Word of God and administers the sacraments, through which God calls the hearers to eternal life, and in which He is efficacious. Then he compels and punishes only with the Word of God, that is, with the voice of the Gospel and excommunication, without physical force. But the ruler is the guardian of the peace and of external discipline, and he is armed with the sword to control and punish the contumacious with lawful physical punishments.

Now when I say that the ruler is the person who maintains discipline, you must understand that he is to be the guardian of both tables of the Decalogue that is, he shall serve not only as the protector of the peace—as a shepherd of a flock—not only as the guardian of our physical welfare, but primarily for the glory of God, as it pertains to outward morals. Just as all civil governments sanction punishments against perjury, many also among the heathen sanction punishments against Epicurean or atheistic people who openly say that there is no God or that there is no divine providence. But we must follow the Law of God which says [Lev. 19:4], "Flee idols." Again Lev. 24[:16], "He who blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death." Deut. 12[:3], "Overturn the altars of idols." Deut. 18[:10], "Let there be no sorcerers or spellcasters in the land."

These are the precepts of the natural law, and they pertain to the Second Commandment [Deut. 6:11], "You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain. For the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain." This statement must be applied to all men, even to all creatures. And each person in his own station must prohibit open indignities against God. Therefore, the rulers must both prohibit and punish Epicurean speeches, the honoring of idols, perjury, pacts with devils, and the profession of ungodly doctrines. These points are also commanded [Ps. 2:10 ff.], "Now, therefore, be wise, 0 kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear." Prov. 25[:5], "Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne will be established in righteousness." And 1 Sam. 2[:30], "Those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be despised."

Therefore, not only godly kings in Judah but also the kings of other nations, after they have learned the true teaching about God, have prohibited indignities against the true God, as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius the Mede. Likewise, Constantine and Theodosius acted correctly when they destroyed idols. For although the ruler does not judge or change secret opinions in the minds of people, yet external sins he must prohibit for the sake of God's glory, so that more people are not led astray by permissiveness and evil examples.

Therefore, kings, princes, and rulers in our present age must inspect the churches and be concerned that they are being properly taught, so that the minds of men may be turned to the true invocation of God and to the other duties of piety, and that the worship of idols be prohibited and the teaching of false opinions which are in conflict with the Gospel not be encouraged or spread by any kind of people. We must be obedient to the voice of the eternal Father when He commands regarding our Lord Jesus Christ [Luke 9:35], "Hear Him." Thus, we must hold fast and glorify the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by repudiating all heathen, Jews, Turks, and raving heretics. The princes must remove from the church the heathen doctrine of the pope, the heathen rituals of invoking the dead, and the horrendous profanations of the Lord's Supper. The eternal and immutable commands of God direct us [Deut. 6:11]: "You shall not take the name of the Lord Your God in vain." Likewise, "Hear Him." God enjoins the rulers to guard society in His name so that they watch over divine things, that is, the true knowledge and invocation of God, and true righteousness and peace. For how can they be called the vicars of God [Rom. 13:4, 6] if they do not acknowledge the Lord and are not concerned that He be acknowledged by others?

In another place in a longer disputation, I have shown that the reforming of the churches pertains to the duties of the rulers, especially with the withdrawal of the bishops or the attacks upon the Gospel. Some say that the secular magistrate is not the judge of controversies over doctrine. But the correct and explicated answer is that the church is the judge and must follow the norm of the Gospel in making its judgments. When the ruler is a godly member of the church, he himself along with other pious and learned men must judge in keeping with the norm which I have mentioned; for to all the members of the church it is said [Matt. 7:15], "Beware of false prophets." Again [Gal. 1:9], "If anyone teaches any other Gospel, let him be anathema." Therefore, just as any other godly men, the rulers must give consideration to the teachings, and if someone sows false or ungodly opinions and defends them, they should judge him and place him under the anathema. Indeed they would be erring leaders if they concluded that this concern did not pertain to their work.

In regard to the other offices of rulers, that is, the governance of civil morality, the protection of the peace, legal or military service; concerning slavery, equity, and

the laws governing households or borrowing and repaying—such matters must be dealt with by other experts, namely, by lawyers. The Gospel shows the reasons for and the worthiness of the civil order, and in a general way teaches that rulers should be obedient to the commands of God, because God commands kings, princes, and the people alike. He will judge kings, princes and the people alike, as it is written [Mark 16:15], "Go, preach the Gospel to every creature." Zech. 10[:3], "My anger is kindled against the shepherds." Micah 3[:9, 12], "Now hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob . . . because of you Zion shall be plowed like a field." Ezek. 34[:7, 9], "Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord."

I shall add only one admonition. It is not permissible for kings, princes, and rulers to act contrary to the divine law and contrary to the natural law. And this is a precept of both the divine and the natural law [Ex. 20:15]: "You shall not steal." This word distinguishes between the property and the possessions of each individual; it builds a wall around the concept of ownership of property and land. And people have certain things as private property by both divine and human law. The law "You shall not steal" protects the princes from the people. But the kings and princes should not think that they are permitted to take to themselves whatever they wish from the properties of their subjects and that the citizens have no property of their own.

God in His law had distinguished the rights of ownership in the lands of the Israelites and sanctioned the right to sell it or retain it. Therefore, He did not permit Ahab either to force Naboth to sell his vineyard or to drive him from possessing it. By this law, "You shall not steal," Naboth was protected from an outsider. And God as the avenger attacks by name this wrong which Ahab had committed in occupying the vineyard of another man, and He punishes him by a memorable example in order to warn the princes that they should keep their hands off the property of their citizens, as the Baptist says [Luke 3:14], "Be content with your wages." People should pay lawful tribute, as Paul says in Rom. 13[:6 ff.], which the Baptist calls wages. And when the defense of the nation or some other demonstrable cause demands the gathering of more money, it is just that citizens support the church and the nation.

But the passage in the history of Samuel [1 Sam. 8:11–18] speaks of the legal right of kings regarding tribute. It does not grant limitless license to princes to lay hands on the property of their citizens to any degree they wish, because the citizens have certain legal rights under both divine and human law.

There are also questions regarding contracts, about which godly people know certain things in general, such as that a contract is a part of the civil order and one of the good things ordained by God. Indeed a very clear picture of the judgment and will of God has been impressed upon contracts. In them God teaches us that justice is equitable, so that when we think about the will of God we should know that it is just, that is, equitable for equals. Tyrants are not equitable for equals; they take care of some people by private arrangements and neglect others who are either their equals or better. This inequity is called called "respect of persons" [Rom. 2:11; James 2:1], a characteristic which is not in God. Rather, you must know that God is equitable to you and to the robber on the cross, to Moses and to Elijah. He has set forth this rule, according to which He maintains fair play; He is angry at this sin in all of us, and again He receives all who take refuge in Christ, the mediator.

Look at the example of the justice of God and His equity in the appeasing of the wrath of God. Sins are not forgiven unless an equal ransom has been paid for us, namely, the Son of God. And our daily use of contracts, terms of purchase, sales, trades, leases, and terms of employment all instruct us regarding this equity, as do the retributions we get for breaking them.

Finally, this very equity required in contracts instructs us regarding our love toward our neighbor. It is a way of interpreting particular cases, as in the command [in Matt. 19:19], "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." This means that there shall be equity between you and your neighbor. You shall not increase your goods at his expense; you shall not oppress him so that your reputation is increased, and you shall not fleece him so that you pile up things for yourself. Finally, you shall in no way seek undue advantage, but shall strive for fairness. You shall give to your neighbor those things which you judge ought to be given to you.

I have already spoken previously about contracts, and now I am laying down this rule: from the fountains of the teaching of the law we can understand which contracts are to be approved, and in which ones that equity is preserved which a prudent and just lawyer believes should be produced.

Although our exhortations do not have a great deal of authority, I want to add here this one point which pertains especially to the office of the princes—the concern for education and schools in which the necessary arts, literature, and sciences may be provided for the church. Thus Is. 49[:23] says, "Kings will be your foster fathers and queens your nursing mothers," that is, the kings and the rulers. Again, "the queens," that is, the governments and the cities, will give hospitality and financial support, and will develop teachers and learners of the doctrine of God and of those areas of knowledge which are necessary for the church. A great reward has been offered for the performance of this work. Matt. 10[:42], "He who gives a cup of water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple," that is, for helping in his education, "Verily, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."

In order that rulers may be influenced by these precepts and promises and invited to encourage education, our Lord Jesus Christ will bring it about that from place to place He will preserve schools and the other

things related to them. Since He has promised that the church will remain (even though in this last old age of the world, there will be more confusion), it is certain that the church will have some place of refuge, some friendly governments and some schools. And in this hope we encourage the study of letters, and we pray the eternal God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He would guide our labors in teaching and in learning, and aid and cause us to be saving instruments of His mercy for the church of God and for ourselves.

Locus 21
Human Ceremonies in the Church

Everything covered thus far in this work has first dealt with dogmas which belong to the church and which deal with God and other eternal things, such as, the Law of God, sin, the Gospel, grace, righteousness, and the sacraments, and last of all we dealt with civil life, or our life in society. Now we shall speak about that level of works which belong in a much lower position, beneath the doctrine and works of which we have spoken above. We shall speak of the ceremonies which have been developed by human authority in the church, among which there is a very great difference. For some are useful for good order. In the schools, the hours and the subject matters are divided into sections, and the students are separated into different classes. The family prescribes the order for the students: in the morning they recite prayers, and then when they have eaten breakfast they study reading, and later on they do other domestic duties. Likewise, in the public gatherings of the church, the nature of men requires some kind of order.

But in addition to these useful ceremonies or rituals which have been developed for the sake of good order, men also in all ages have added many others, partly out of superstition, partly out of greed, partly by selfish considerations. And some of these are in open opposition to the commands of God.

Since human weakness thinks that these rituals are so marvelous that it believes that they are the greatest works of all and serve particularly well to placate the wrath of God, and because of fascination with such things, the church has lost the light of the Gospel concerning Christ, the mediator, and faith in Him. Because great darkness and discord have overtaken the church of God, it is necessary for us to discuss and explain the judgment of the Gospel regarding these regulations and works.

In the first place, I warn the reader that at this point I am not talking about the civil laws of rulers or civil offices which properly pertain to the governance by rulers and which have been instituted for the common defense of the peace and tranquillity of nations. Rather, we are speaking of the authority of those regulations which have been established by men in the church and are judged to be either exercises especially for piety or for the worship of God, such as celibacy, certain forms of fasting, repetitious prayers, and the like.

Furthermore, although men in civil life who do not love the Gospel tragically complain that the authority of the laws is being eroded because some of them are not enforced, and they argue that this sets a dangerous example, yet it is necessary that the glory of Christ and the salvation of the godly who must be educated take priority over these complaints, in order that we may retain the light of the Gospel and observe the difference between the necessary worship of God and worthless superstitions.

Nor should it deter us from explaining this point that many are abusing the doctrine of liberty. But we must contend very strongly on both sides in our teaching, that the necessary doctrine which God has given us be taught purely and faithfully, and that the abuses—of whatever kind—be severely attacked, and that those people be rejected who, under the pretext of this freedom which is born out of the blood of Christ, indulge in their depraved desires and bring in moral practices which might cause ordinary people to forsake the Gospel.

Therefore, I shall comment on three rules.

Rule one. Just as Eve sinned by obeying the devil when he urged her to act in a manner contrary to the command of God, so all people sin if they obey laws or edicts which command them to act in a manner contrary to the commands of God, whether these are the laws set forth by bishops or by kings or by other rulers or by devils. For the word of the apostles is true [Acts 5:29]: "We must obey God rather than men." Thus when the king of Babylon commanded that the people worship the golden statue, it was necessary not to obey him and to show great constancy of faith—which is the true worship of God—as the three Israelites did, as recorded in Daniel [3]. Thus the apostles in opposition to the command of the high priest taught the Gospel in Acts 5 and openly testified that they were putting the command of God ahead of all others.

At this point godly people should consider the laws of the popes and the kings which order us to act contrary to the commands of God. Ungodly edicts are constantly promulgated against hearing the pure doctrine of the Gospel, against reading it, and against teaching it to the people. Ministers are forced into repeated profanation of the Lord's Supper in the Mass in keeping with the usual custom. The invocation of the dead is tenaciously retained. Marriage is prohibited to priests, although not all are suited to celibacy and despite the fact that God has commanded marriage for all who cannot live a celibate life without stumbling, as it clearly says in 1 Cor. 7[:2], "Because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife," and again [v. 9], "It is better to marry than to burn."

Now understand what a great multitude of men are held in bondage to these unjust laws—men who cannot call upon God because of lapses in conscience, who are drawn away from God and rush into eternal destruction. The popes and the kings commit terrible sins when they establish laws that hinder the true in-

vocation of God, that is, when they command something to be done which cannot be done without offense of conscience. Just as Eve sinned in obeying the voice of the devil, so others sin when they place ungodly laws above the mandate of God and allows themselves to reject the true invocation of God.

No one can sufficiently deplore the enormity of the sin which this tragic servitude brings with it. Indeed, the wisdom of men is not great enough to understand sufficiently the greatness of these evils. The great majority of the people who are called the church lie under the oppression of tyrannical laws which establish the worship of idols, errors, and wicked lusts, and hinder the true invocation of God. And these laws are defended with great cruelty and punishments. Honorable men are put to death and many pious people are killed when they violate some ungodly law. Many godly priests have been cruelly put to death because they married, although no barbarian ruler ever killed men for such a reason.

Civil rulers are vociferous in asserting that they must not assent to any changes in the laws, lest an anarchy of frightful evils should follow, and then would come the destruction of necessary dogmas and divine laws. They raise as an objection the old precept which Aristotle quoted in his *Politica:* "Small beginnings must not be overlooked," since additions of wrongdoing are soon added. Yet these matters are put ahead of the eternal and immutable law [of Deut. 6:5], "You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart." And again [Lev. 19:43], "Flee idols." Therefore it is necessary that in teaching we attack unjust laws, and in the face of these edicts we must obey the command of God.

At this point I am not speaking of the bondage of our bodies or our property, for we must endure the calamities which are caused by negligence or wickedness on the part of civil rulers, along with their plundering, their outward uproars, and the injuries and the evils of their wars. But I do deplore the bondage of consciences since it hinders true invocation, and it drives countless hoards of people either into Epicurean contempt for God or into eternal despair. "Woe to those," says Isaiah [10:1], "who write unrighteous laws." Woe to those who in our age defend them either with punishments or sophistic trickery. Pighius dares to issue this most shameful statement, which we find in his writings—that it is less sinful for a priest to pollute himself with adultery than to take a wife. Certain wise men publicly applaud this. But the superstitions of human laws must never be placed above the true invocation of God or the salvation of souls, since that would be a manifest impiety. Although certain crafty men try to paint over these errors, the truth is so clearly revealed that no sophistry, no sycophancy can hide it. Before our eyes are the miseries which have arisen out of the law of celibacy. No person in his right mind can consider without tears and groaning the perversion of the doctrine of repentance, of faith, of true invocation, of the profaning of the Lord's Supper, and of the invocation of the dead.

I must break off what is not a disputation (for the matter is perfectly clear) but a lament about the first rule, and speak more briefly and more dispassionately than the enormity of the evils involved merits—evils which have arisen out of ungodly and tyrannical laws in the church over such a long period of time, and still are arising and will continue to do so until the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, delivers His church and shows Himself to the entire human race at the resurrection of the dead. But I pray this Lord that He would lessen the burdens of the church and rescue some remnant for Himself and cleanse the sons of Levi, that is, that from time to time He would raise up teachers who rightly teach and not allow the light of the Gospel to be extinguished.

The second rule. Certain works are by their very nature adiaphora—matters of indifference—things which are neither commanded by the law of God nor forbidden by it, such as refraining from eating meat, using a common vestment, or the clothing of monks. Although it is granted that it is a matter of adiaphora to do such things (as long as it is without superstition), yet in our teaching we must oppose laws regarding matters of adiaphora because many pernicious errors are attached to them; and it is a godly thing to show appropriate examples of teaching in the use of our liberty. Therefore, I shall cite seven errors which have been attached to traditions of this kind.

The first error. Many people have taught and still do teach that fasting and similar exercises merit the remission of sins—both the remission of the guilt as well as the punishment. This Pharisaic error can capture the minds of the people and obfuscate the light of the doctrine of the benefits of Christ and of faith. For when men think that they merit the remission of sins by these rituals, they transfer the honor which they owe to God over to these rites. In some cases they develop an empty confidence or create doubts which finally lead to their destruction. And particularly for this reason, Paul contends so sharply for the abrogation of circumcision and other ceremonial laws of Moses—so that this light of the doctrine will not be extinguished in the church, and so that, for the sake of Christ, the mediator, believers might have the remission of their sins and be accounted righteous and be made heirs of eternal life, not because of circumcision or the other ceremonies of Moses. Often he warns that we must beware that this light of the Gospel not be obscured by new human ceremonies. And there is no doubt that this Pharisaic error must be attacked at once.

The second error is not so obvious, but it is still pernicious. Certain people who are very astute now recognize that the previous Pharisaic error cannot be defended, and thus they have restated it: Although these ceremonies do not merit the remission of sins,

yet they are good works and the worship of God, so we must defend these traditions, just as in the law of Moses the abstinence of the Nazirites was defended—even though it did not merit the remission of sins—since it was pleasing to God and was a form of worship which He appreciated, and it had its rewards.

Recently certain people have learned how to reinstate these traditions. They are people who still not only contend for matters of adiaphora but try to establish even worse abuses. Therefore, it is necessary that godly people be on their guard against these tricks, for great error is hidden under this whitewash. It is not correct to cite the example of Moses. There is an enormous difference between the works which have been instituted by God and ordained by Him, and those works which men have dreamed up, which have been neither commanded nor ordained by God. The former were worship forms—works which were ordained in the law—even though they did not merit the remission of sins. But the man-made religions which were created by men without the mandate of God neither were nor are the worship of God—no more than the ceremonies of the Gentiles and their hymns of praise were the worship of God, even though many of them were very beautiful. Christ cries [Matt. 15:9], "In vain do they worship Me, teaching the commandments of men." And elsewhere the prophets and apostles often reject these rituals which have been established without the Word of God, as in 1 Tim. 4[:1], where they are called "the doctrine of devils." The sheer force of this statement ought to move pious minds to consider with what kind of wisdom matters of adiaphora ought to be accepted.

Even if for the sake of order certain honorable rituals ought to be retained (as in the schools, where we continue to observe the order of Scripture readings), yet it is a vastly different thing to attribute to these rites the honor that they are the worship of God, that is, works which God approves, so that through them He might judge that He is being honored. And yet if we adopt this erroneous notion, then the problem grows; we begin to think that through them we merit the remission of sins. God rejects and detests this effrontery of men which devises worship forms according to human reason. Just as the Israelites set up the figure of a calf and established rites according to their own reason, so also the Gentiles did the same thing. But why was their example condemned if it is permitted to everyone to devise his worship of God on his own authority? But men do not understand this little-known sin unless the doctrine of the Gospel is well known. For they love their own inventions and they adorn them with many pretexts—not only as a discipline, but they also put them forward as sacraments through which they say that God is efficacious, and they promote their enthusiasms, as do the Corybantes, the Manichaeans, and now in our time the Anabaptists.

Such ravings accompany the admiration we have for human traditions. In some degree this indicates why the Holy Spirit calls them "the doctrines of demons"—because men become fascinated with them, and because of these rites they desert the true knowledge of Christ, faith, and endurance, and devise for themselves new dogmas and wild ideas beyond all measure, as happened with the Marcionites and the Manichaeans. Our age is clearly witnessing this taking place in the case of the Anabaptists and their fanatical errors which are tossed here and there by the waves.

Therefore we must cling to the correct definition of the worship of God. The worship of God is the work which has been commanded by God or established with the sure testimony of God. God pronounces that He is honored by it. It is a work which must be performed with the immediate or principal purpose of obeying God and honoring Him. Indeed, it must be performed in the light of faith in Christ. The work of the First Commandment is the immediate purpose, so that God is indeed given honor, is known, and is respected. The work of the Second Table is the immediate purpose, namely, the defense of our body and our neighbor, just as it is the immediate purpose of the godly soldier to do battle for the common deliverance, and yet the ultimate purpose is that he might give honor to God. But the hypocrites imagine that the immediate purpose of why they cannot eat meat on the sixth day is because God judges that He is given honor through this ritual. This is a foolish opinion. Thus, when we have established the definition, we can refute these tricks which these vagabonds and cheats mix in regarding the worship now with their painting of pictures of human traditions.

The third error. Above all, these hypocrites dream up the notion that perfection is performing the works of human traditions, that is, works which are better and more pleasing to God than those which the Decalogueue prescribes. And under this persuasion they place monasticism above church government, civil life, and marriage. This dementia is particularly to be condemned, and it has already been attacked by Gerson.

The fourth error. They also add the idea of necessity. They believe that the observance of human traditions is necessary even beyond a case of giving offense. Under this persuasion they condemn those who do not observe these rituals as people who have deserted the church—seditious schismatics who have turned away from the people of God and have been excluded from the church, just as in ancient times some were condemned because they did not observe the same date of Easter as did the rest. We must contend against this idea of necessity, in the first place because the righteousness of the Gospel must not be thought of as some kind of external civil order, or that discord should arise over differences of this kind in the matter of rituals. Freedom in the Gospel has been given on such things, and it must not be abolished by human authority. Thus Christ wants us to believe that neither the Mosaic ceremonies nor human traditions are mat-

ters of necessity, as in Col. 2 [:16], where it says, "Let no one judge you in food or in drink, . . . " that is, let no one bind or condemn your conscience because of these rituals. And again [Verses 20–21], "Since you are dead with Christ to the elements of the world," that is, dead to the precepts or ordinances by which the life of this world is regulated, "Why are you—as if you are still living in this world—carrying out its edicts, such as 'Touch not, taste not?' " And Gal. 5[:1], "Stand fast in the liberty for which Christ has made you free, so that you do not again fall into bondage." He commands us to keep hold of this statement about our freedom lest our consciences be tormented by foolish talk about meat, or lest discords arise if one of us does not observe human traditions.

The fifth error. The idea of necessity has produced great darkness, that is to say, unfortunate imitations of the law of Moses. After these persuasions have taken possession of our minds, [we erroneously think that] just as in the law of Moses there were necessary ceremonies, so now there are necessary ceremonies. The kingdom of Christ is transformed into a civil state similar to the Jewish state. They put one man in charge of the whole church as high priest, then they devise levels of priests and an external system of sacrifices. To the high priest they give the additional power of establishing ceremonies and the law of celibacy. This whole imitation has brought great darkness to the minds of people and obscured their understanding of both Law and Gospel, with great attacks leveled against the epistles to the Galatians and the Hebrews. The Levitical priests signify to us the ministry of the Gospel, and the Mosaic sacrifices signify the administration of the Gospel and repentance in our minds. The new righteousness signifies the Spirit, invocations, confession, the bearing of the cross, etc., as it says in John 4[:23], "The true worshiper worships the Father in spirit and in truth." and 1 Peter 2[:5], "Bring forth spiritual sacrifices which are pleasing to God for the sake of Jesus Christ."

The sixth error. In addition to this, the bishops arrogate to themselves the authority to create traditions, which the Gospel does not give them the right to do. But as long as this persuasion controls them—that works devised by men, without the Word of God, are the worship of God—then the bishops pile up traditions, because they are in charge, and so that they will seem to be anxious about the increase in piety. Gregory did this first, then Innocent, and then many [other] popes who have made the laws even more intolerable and confirmed this notion of necessity in order to increase their own authority. They have said that those people are guilty of the eternal wrath of God if they do not observe the traditions which have been laid down by their bishops. The statements which I have cited above refute this error, such as Col. 2[:16], "Let no one judge you in food or in drink." And in Acts [15:10], Peter earnestly rebukes those who wish to load the Mosaic ceremonies onto the Gentiles, saying, "Why do you tempt God by placing a yoke on the necks of the disciples, something which neither you nor your fathers could bear?"

It is no light crime to tempt God. For it is not from the weakness of offense, but from contempt for God that His Word is set aside, as if we were setting up a contention with Him and a love of conflict between our wisdom and His. God commanded the people of Israel to sacrifice in no place other than in that one place where He willed that the teachers be gathered and the ark set up. But human wisdom went to work and set aside the Word of God, and reasoned that it would be good for men to worship God in other places and with different ceremonies: "Therefore let us establish little sanctuaries and altars in different places, and let us sacrifice not only cattle but also men, so that in so great and difficult an action our zeal might be clearly seen." These were the sources of the worship of idols. In the same way, in more recent times Masses have been piled up and the command has been given to remain celibate. But here the pious should remember the word of Peter which teaches that the defense of such laws and notions is a serious sin. For it is no small error to tempt God, that is, to put our wisdom ahead of His, and to arouse His wrath by our zeal for seeking things contrary to His Word and by contending against Him. These are evils which are not well known and which civil wisdom cannot judge. But having been instructed about these things, we in the church must consider that we must subject ourselves to the Word of God and not desire to be governed by our own notions.

The seventh error. Since this notion of righteousness or necessity in regard to human traditions clings to our minds, terrible discords follow, just as in days gone by dissentions arose about the date of the Passover and the use of leavened bread. And in our day the popes not only use the thunder and lightening of excommunication against married priests and disturb the church with unjust accusations, but they even use Neronian cruelty to kill pious priests who have violated some unjust traditions.

Human traditions are defended because of these seven errors (whether because of all seven or only some of them), as testified by the books of those who confess that they are the enemies of our churches. Although they claim to be speaking about matters of adiaphora, God commands that these errors be held in check and attacked, and Christ and the prophets and apostles do attack them repeatedly. Nor should our teachers be mute when the church is polluted with ungodly ceremonies or consciences are caught in the traps of human traditions.

It is also beneficial to refute these errors after the doctrine of true ceremonies has been taught carefully. For superstitious opinion hangs on very tenaciously unless examples of deliverance from it are shown to us. Thus Paul did not want Titus to be circumcized [cf. Gal.

2:3], in order that he might show him as an example of liberty; and he argued against Peter, using this example when Peter was corroborating the stubbornness of those who wanted to hang on to the Mosaic ceremonies [cf. v. 11 ff.]. The story is told of Spiridon, the bishop of Cyprus, and it is worth remembering. When a guest came to his house on a fast day, and they could not on such a day easily buy or cook the usual meal for this person, the bishop ordered the meat which had been prepared and set aside to be placed before him. "I do not eat this meat on this day," said the guest, "for I am a Christian." Spiridon replied to him, "It is proper that you do eat this meat for the very reason that I am a Christian. For every creation of God is a good thing, and nothing is rejected which can be eaten with thanksgiving." The guest obeyed, and instructed by this example he learned that there are far greater acts of worship which should be presented to God than this distinction of foods. Indeed, in this very meal he offered a greater form of worship: he gave thanks to God, and he turned his thoughts to the freedom which has been given by our Lord Jesus Christ. He not only frees us from the laws regarding food, but much more importantly delivers us from much more frightful chains. He nails them to His cross so that He does not condemn us.

I have mentioned these matters in order that godly people may understand why human traditions may be violated by both precept and example, and why they may oppose this list of errors with new statements by new orators who have learned now to paint human traditions with marvelous sophistries, and who, if they are successful, can also excuse the religions of the Gentiles with their marvelous sophistry. But this love of sophistry must be blown out of the church, and we must call a spade a spade and not play games with words.

Now that we have pointed out the errors which are inherent in these traditions and have condemned them, I will say what we should believe regarding these adiaphoristic rituals, which ones should be preserved in the churches of the Reformation, and which errors should be removed.

The third rule. In the churches which have been reformed, some rituals which are matters of adiaphora do remain, because in this life our actions have to be arranged in some kind of order. The nature of men understands and loves order, and it is particularly appropriate for the church and gatherings of people. Thus Paul very earnestly says in 1 Cor. 14[:40], "Let all things be done properly and in order." He demands not only order but a particular care for adorning this order, and thus he adds "properly" in order that we may see what is appropriate for the persons, the places, and the times. There is more need for reverence in churches than in the theater. The action and the speaking of those who teach is more dignified and serious in the divinely called meeting at which Christ and the angels are present than on the stage.

Thus I say that the rites which are matters of adiaphora in the churches which have been reformed should be preserved for the sake of good order, but not added because of the notion of righteousness, worship, necessity, or in support of other errors which I have mentioned above. And we need to keep in mind that except for the matter of offense there is no sin in violating these traditions. Now I shall mention shortly what offenses we must avoid.

Gerson has sought out a great variety of necessary traditions. He sees that this enormous burden is a bloody torment for the consciences of right-minded men, and that on the other hand men who are less able to bear the burdens of the laws adopt an Epicurean contempt for all religion, since they cannot observe too many traditions. Therefore, he establishes grades of traditions. Some, he says, are established for the sake of outward beauty, and others for the sake of necessity. But the mitigations of Gerson do not unburden consciences. The divine authority lightens them by the Word given us through the apostles, which expressly rejects the notion of righteousness and necessity. And public tranquility will again be strengthened by this doctrine: we say that these rites which have been set forth for the sake of good order must be observed for the sake of propriety, and that stubborn men are indeed sinning when they disregard such rituals and give offense in the churches of the Reformation. This is the true necessity of traditions which also unburdens consciences and is useful for maintaining peace.

Some men are by nature savage, and they regard all laws as hateful prisons. It is certainly beneficial to instruct such people regarding the purpose of the law, namely, good order. And we should exhort them to avoid offense and understand that they do not live only for themselves but also for others—indeed, for the church of God.

Others are more placid by nature and more concerned about the feelings of others, and understand that they are born for society. Indeed, they perceive that their chief task is to be eager to help and promote the church. Of their own will, they do observe honorable and useful rituals and avoid offenses. They realize that the public worship services of the church have been established by the special counsel and blessing of God, and that God wills that these services be held frequently, so that the Word of the Gospel may be proclaimed publicly in the land. Such people are eager to maintain good order, tranquility, and reverence in the gatherings of the churches and in the schools, especially since order is conducive for teaching the uneducated multitude, so long as a lengthy series of feast days is not rashly created. For not all the accounts can be recited in one day, and it is better to delay part of the lesson until later. And when the division of time is congruent with the events which are taking place, it will not be more pleasant, but it still will be better for the memory.

Not only should men observe a definite series of days, but also God Himself has preserved in the Old and the New Testaments an order of festival days to observe His marvelous deeds. Just as He willed that a lamb be sacrificed at the beginning of spring, at the same time of year our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified and raised again. Just as on the fiftieth day after the departure from Egypt the law was promulgated with public testimony from Mount Sinai, so on the fiftieth day after the Passover by manifest testimony the Holy Spirit was given.

Now we are in the 1,544th year after the birth of Christ. Therefore God Himself and our Lord Jesus Christ and the prophets and the whole church of God, from the Exodus from Egypt to this very year, have attributed to the days of Passover and Pentecost certain sacred activities for 3,049 years. A man who looks at this consensus between God and the church and at these examples, unless he is a one-eyed cyclops, will judge that it is an honorable thing to gather together before God and the everlasting church, and he will consider that he is present as a spectator of those events by which God in those times signified something very important. Indeed, we ought to regard these public gatherings as a beautiful image of our eternal relationship with God, with Christ, and with the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, and other godly men. Such rituals are useful when they are observed in this way without superstition, and they are beneficial for teaching. For where there is no order, no discipline, it is impossible to teach people. And it is necessary that the Gospel be heard and taught. For God does not gather His church in any other way than through the preaching of the Gospel, and we should not even consider a church of the elect except in this visible assembly in which the Gospel is rightly and purely taught. Therefore, this visible assembly is to be loved and cared for, and the ministry of the Gospel must be retained and honorable gatherings must be held. For this purpose there is constant need for order and proper rites.

Indeed, each head of the household should see to it that there is reading and the saying of prayers each morning and evening in his home. Nor should a day go by without calling upon God and giving Him thanks. For in this way, we who have been created and redeemed by God should honor Him as God, and these exercises are profitable for instruction and for arousing fear and faith in us. And in these exercises we must keep in mind the statement of Christ [Luke 11:13], "How much more will your heavenly Father give His Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" Therefore, we must pray to be taught, guided, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. And whenever we pray, we must determine with certainty and remember that the Holy Spirit is efficacious through our meditation on the Gospel.

Locus 22
The Mortification of the Flesh

Some defend the laws of fastings, satisfactions (as they call them), and the superstitions of monks under the pretext of statements which have been made regarding mortification. Since mortification, they say, is a good and pious work, why should we not also praise those human laws concerning fastings and similar rites? Again at this point hypocrisy sets its traps for the true doctrine and true worship. We must distinguish between the mandates of God and human mandates, and carefully consider what Paul calls true mortification. We must not apply the term—which actually describes very important matters, which God has commanded—to futile and useless rites, as in all ages the arrogance of hypocrites has shown off and defended their ceremonies by high-sounding titles.

The term "mortification" signifies either the patience commanded by God in true sorrows, in the sense of the wrath of God with sufferings and afflictions, or the moderation commanded by God which controls our lusts. It does not refer to man-made religions or ceremonies which we have added without the command of God.

In regard to the first kind of mortification, that is, patience in true sorrows and under the cross, Paul says in 2 Cor. 4[:10], "Always bearing about in the flesh the mortification of the Lord Jesus, that also the life of Jesus may be manifested in our body." And the words which follow give an interpretation as to what he means by the term "mortification." He says that as long as we live, we are delivered to death for the sake of Jesus, in order that our life in Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal body. We are always subject to death; we are seized to be punished because of our confession of Christ; we are vexed by the terrors of the devil. He calls this the "mortification" of Christ, that is to say, a mortification which is similar to the afflictions of Christ and which is a characteristic of the church. In regard to this point, Rom. 12[:1] also says, "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice—pleasing to God—which is your rational worship." Paul is not speaking of ceremonies or simulated exercises, but of the cross, that is, speaking about endurance under real and great anguish. This is the sacrifice among those people who sustain themselves by their faith in the Son of God, as Ps. [51:17] says, "The sacrifice of God is a contrite spirit; a broken and a humble spirit, O God, You will not despise." We have spoken above about this kind of mortification under the section on the cross.

In regard to the second kind of mortification, that is, the moderation which has been commanded by God there are many statements which are made repeatedly. Luke 21[:34], "Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing and drunkenness." Matt. 17[:21], "This kind of demon is not cast out except by prayer and fasting." Eph. 6[:4], "Bring up your children in the discipline and teaching of the Lord," that is, teach the doctrine to your children and get them accustomed to it with godly training; guide their morals so that they may be humble, chaste, and godly, and train them by honorable and clear labor so that they may not—as often happens—give way to idleness and dissipation, which in turn produce sins which drive out the Holy Spirit!

Whether mortification refers to the enduring under the cross or the moderation, the word speaks of works which have been commanded. But it is also true that there is freedom for each person individually to choose the honorable exercise of his faith which is suitable for his age and his powers, just as school masters are free to determine the reading lesson and the order of the discussions. Thus also Paul says in 1 Cor. 9[:27], "I discipline my body and bring it into subjection" with this purpose—that intemperance not hinder the Holy Spirit, and the good intention of my mind in my worship, in my studies, or in my business affairs. Nor does he establish as the immediate purpose of fasting that a person should think that God is honored by such a work.

And moderation in general is commanded, but other spiritual exercises are also appropriate. And thus the choice of these is a matter of freedom. Otherwise old people would be preoccupied with cares, sorrows, and pains, and their weaknesses would control their bodies. On the other hand, vigorous young people would not be bothered at all, as in the case of David who before his exile had greater need of training than afterwards, when he was broken down with the greatness of his sorrows and dragged his weakened members around half-alive. Good physical health and a vigorous mind are wonderful gifts of God, necessary for studies and for our business relationships. Therefore they must be guarded, and the body is not to be debauched either by gluttony or by self-imposed starvation. Paul commands us to hold our body in honor.

Since there is so great a dissimilarity among people, the church does not promulgate laws by which it prescribes one particular mode of fasting or spiritual exercises. But it makes general prescriptions for moderation and at the same time it instructs that these exercises be not turned superstitiously into a kind of worship, and it mandates that we maintain the difference between the works commanded by God and those exercises which we have chosen to do. Thus Paul says

in 1 Tim. 4[:7 ff.], "Exercise yourself to godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things." This is a very important admonition which distinguishes necessary works that have been commanded by God from exercises of our own choosing. Furthermore, he commands that the works mandated by God are far more important—works such as repentance, the fear of God, faith, invocation, confession, endurance, chastity, moderation, and diligence in our calling. These virtues, he says, are useful for all things. God in this life rewards and adorns these virtues with great blessings: with brighter light and spiritual wisdom, with stronger faith, with counsel, comfort, and success in governing both public and domestic things, with chastity, peace, and physical sustenance; and after this life eternal rewards are bestowed. But the exercise of our bodies is only worth a little.

He also understands that works that have been chosen by us (as when someone wants to eat only a little food on a certain day)—if they are done without superstition, they need not be entirely rejected, but he places them far below the works commanded by God. For there was some benefit, in the sense that it is better that sober people have a good intention in their minds for calling upon God, for their studies and for their business. Banquets, social affairs, and worldly conversations poison our minds so that the fires of lusts can more easily enter in, as happened to David in his idleness. And the versicles are well-known: "Insidious idleness is harmful to the complacent. They lose their concern, and the wine flows" [Ovid, *Ars amatoria* 1.238]. And Seneca says in regard to banqueting, "I am not referring to the customs which I praise. Drunken people can neither in mind or body have the proper concern for important matters. They waste time which should be spent in doing good things, and in their lack of good judgment they fall into great crimes." But it is particularly sad that their calling upon God is drowned in their drunkenness.

We must not spurn the common saying: "To avoid occasions for sins is to avoid sin." Good minds will understand the occasions and the immediate causes for lapses, and with great diligence avoid these dangers so that they do not needlessly expose themselves to orgies. They will prefer moderation and spend their time with definitely useful labors in which they then may include the worship of God.

It is very beneficial for both our health and our morals not to confuse the order of time which has been prescribed by nature. Thus many people devote the whole day partly to sleep and partly to banqueting, and then at night they have no time for either studies or business. Seneca is correct when he says, "This is the definition of excess: to rejoice in what is perverted, and not only to depart from what is upright but to depart as far as possible."

Nor does the devil cease to be active when he sees minds which are devoid of concern, but he himself provides other occasions for falling. We must avoid all of these evils, both by our own diligence and by prayer for divine guidance, as it is written [Luke 11:13], "How much more will He give His Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

The monks try with their rules to comprehend the exercises of this diligence. But they only add superstitious and stupid ideas, and this distinction cannot be comprehended from their laws. Therefore they should not defend their traditions regarding the distinctions of food under such a pretext, but good and wise men should instruct the young people regularly regarding this diligent concern. And instructors should be eager to instill it in their teaching and show how important it is, and princes must help us in observing this discipline. I have made these few instructive remarks regarding mortification and discipline in order that we may learn to understand and love true virtues and reject hypocrisy.

Locus 23
Offense

The Greek word is *skandalon,* taken from *skazo,* that is, to limp. For it signifies a stumbling block, that is, something into which a person bumps and falls or becomes confused.

A thing is called a scandal or a scandalous example when a person becomes worse, or because he is confirmed in his error, or because he imitates a bad example, or because he develops even greater feelings of hatred against the Gospel. This explanation of the word should be considered first of all. For the church uses the word "scandal" in this sense, but this usage is unknown to other writers who speak of harmful examples and precedents. A correlative word to "scandal" is the word "offense," which refers to the object from which the offense is taken.

There is a two-fold scandal or a two-fold offense. The first is Pharisaic offense, or, as they say, a scandal which has been received. This is when the ungodly rage against the true doctrine of the Gospel or against honorable and necessary actions, as when they are unwilling to allow the true doctrine to be proclaimed and errors to be attacked, or are unwilling to abolish the worship of idols or to allow a godly priest to live in an honorable marriage. There are many different reasons why the ungodly are angry at the true doctrine or at these necessary changes in conditions. Some are contending for their bellies—men who are unwilling to give up the great profits which came from masses or the prayers to the dead. Others are contending for their own authority. Some are bewitched by these rituals and are unwilling to see those things attacked which they marvel at and approve. They are fascinated with admiration of their own righteousness and are unwilling to hear the word that men are not righteous because of their own worthiness and purity. Because civil leaders see that disagreements among the princes can arise out of these differences of opinions, they are unwilling to start wars and disturbances in public order on matters of doctrine.

There have been many examples of such offenses in all ages of the church; there still are, and there will always be. The priests opposed Jeremiah when he preached about the destruction of Jerusalem, and they had many eloquent arguments against him. Nearly everyone who was learned or in a position of authority among the people of Israel opposed Christ and the apostles, and they were motivated by most convincing reasons. They saw the law of Moses being abolished. And they believed this was the highest crime—that the one and only law which had been given by God to the whole human race was being destroyed. They saw that from this would follow the destruction of that lovely civil order which had been given not by Solon or Augustus, but by the clear voice of God and the sure testimonies which had been established by God. There is no doubt that for these reasons all the wise men among the people were motivated most vigorously and were especially caught up in their persuasion concerning the earthly rule of the Messiah.

Although the destruction of the people certainly brought sorrow to the apostles themselves, they rejected this hypocritical offense and strongly opposed these judgments. They clearly confessed that they owed obedience to God rather than to men since they were under the command of Christ, who had commanded them to gather the church by the word of the Gospel. It is necessary to attack errors concerning God and idols, even if the world falls. We must give priority to the First and Second Commandments above all human matters—our own life, our fortunes, our family, or the peace of the nation.

Hence we must maintain this rule. It is necessary to confess the true doctrine and to flee idols and to carry out the commands of God, even if the ungodly rage and fight back and conceive fierce hatred against the Gospel, regardless of the great dissensions which may arise out of the stubbornness of the ungodly. But the ungodly are the enemies of the Gospel and the cause of dissensions themselves, because they must yield to the truth. People do not sin when they teach correctly in keeping with their calling or confessing the Gospel. Pharaoh sinned when he fought against the word and testimonies of God which Moses proclaimed, but Moses did not sin even when he destroyed all Egypt by his dissent.

The godly are comforted by this rule even in the time of controversies in the church. And we have need for this consolation now. For this prospect of divisions and this clamor which these hypocrites inflict upon us brings great sorrow to right-thinking people. It is not easy to endure it when they call us the enemies of God and the church, parricides, seditious men, and finally plagues of the human race.

In the face of these frightful judgments it is necessary to fortify our minds with clear testimonies from God. Matt. 4[:10], "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve." "You shall serve no foreign gods" [Deut. 6:14]. He is clearly distinguishing the true God, who has revealed Himself in the people of Israel, from false deities when he says that this is Yahweh who has given you His Word, and He testifies that He is truly God by the performance of the miracles by which He led you out of Egypt. Him you are to invoke, and not false deities who are worshiped without and outside of the Word given you by the prophets. And 1 Cor. 10[:14], "Flee the worship of idols."

This precept is absolutely immutable. And it is often repeated by the prophets. Hos. 13[:4], "I am the Lord your God who led you out of Egypt. And you shall know no God but Me, and there is no savior except Me."

Therefore we must call upon the true God and flee idols and not give them standing by our approval. These greatest commandments must be placed ahead of all things—our life, our reputations, the public peace, the life of our children, and the kindness of princes.

Matt. 10[:33], "He who denies Me before men, I will deny him before My Father in heaven." And He adds the comforting side, lest we be shattered by the fear of those who dissent, [v. 35], "I have come to separate a man from his father and a daughter from her mother." These verses speak of important matters and great dangers. Thus we must understand that we are defending true and unshakable statements. But we must not start tumults or disturb the church with false opinions or stupid sophistries and tricks which evil minds sometimes conjure up out of hatred or ambition or the desire for revenge.

Gal. 1[:19], "If any one preaches any other Gospel, let him be anathema." The most extreme form of all disapproval is the anathema, just as among the Greeks the *katharma* (refuse of a sacrifice) or the *alastor* (avenging spirit) refers to something which has been so polluted and condemned by God that, unless it is taken away, the entire human race will be punished with great calamities, wars, famine, pestilence, civil discord, and endless confusion, such as we think of in connection with the people of Sodom or the idol of Lampsacus where Priapus was worshiped.

Such "avenging spirits" were the defenders of ungodly dogmas, as Paul affirms, and this is something which can be easily understood when we take a look at the examples of those people who defended manifest and shameful ravings, or do defend them today, as in the case of the Manichaeans, Paul of Samosata, Arius, Mohammed, and the sad king of the Anabaptists who killed his pregnant wife and through his sedition adorned himself with the crown and the royal title and elevated himself to the position of ruler in the church of God.

Furthermore, just as the Pharisees judged Christ and the apostles to be such a pestilence for the human race, so do the hypocrites in our day, burning with hatred of the Gospel, feel regarding us who are proclaiming the pure doctrine of the Gospel, as shown by the thunderbolts of excommunication which come from the writings of Eck, Cochlaeus, Alphonsus, and others like them. Although similar judgments from wise and important men inflict terrible agony on right-minded men who believe correctly, we must cling to this statement of Paul, who affirms that those who are not zealous for the Gospel but enemies of it are actually anathema, evildoers, "avenging spirits." Therefore we must avoid the company of those people, so that their disease does not harm the innocent. Isaiah says, 51[:7], "Do not fear the reproach of men." And to Abraham God says [Gen. 22:17], "With blessing I will bless you." Ps. 109 threatens the most frightful curse upon the enemies of the Gospel when it says [v. 18], "He clothed himself with cursing." And God comforts the godly so that they are not moved by the thunderous curses of hostile men [v. 28], "Let them curse, but you bless." I believe that this instruction is necessary at this time.

I have already spoken about the offense of the Pharisees. Now we must say something about the other kind of offense, which is called giving offense. In Matt. 18[:7] it says, "Woe to that man through whom offense comes." And this offense is either false doctrine or a bad example which is harmful to others. It confirms in others their license, or it invites others to imitate it, or it keeps some people away from the Gospel, or it offers occasion for cursing Christ or the church of God, or it causes many more sins. Such offenses have taken place from the first fall of Eve, and there will continue to be false doctrines, the worship of idols, human traditions which cannot be observed without sin, and many evil actions which promote other crimes of every kind.

In regard to this second kind of offense we must maintain this very important rule: these offenses—false doctrines and evil examples—are truly sins, condemned by the Word of Christ [Matt. 18:7], "Woe to that man through whom offenses come." Thus we must very carefully and vigilantly avoid these offenses. And at this point the godly should consider what a great multitude of devils and men are guilty and have been guilty because of this kind of wrongdoing. And we should also consider certain examples in order that we may learn to dread the greatness of our sins. For we see that from one sin come countless other sins and punishments, and in the punishments themselves the sins pile up. What an indescribable misery has come upon the human race!

The first author of this kind of offense was the devil himself when he deceived Eve. Then after the fall of Eve and Adam what a mountain of evil came into being! The devil triumphed against God, because he had horribly destroyed this work of God and he increased the harshness of the shame to God through the human race. Furthermore, because of the fall of our first parents all the wickedness of the human race followed, along with the eternal destruction of many people. When Eve and Adam saw the death of their son Abel, they acknowledged that this sad event had come from their own sin. Thus one sin brought with it a huge train of sins and punishments.

What a mountain of crimes and calamities came from the adultery of David! First there was a falling out among the sons themselves. Then a son started a rebellion against his father, polluted the wives of his father—matrons who were filled with the Holy Spirit—and he destroyed thousands of citizens. What a great triumph this was for the devil which brought sorrow to pious people and how great was the grief which was

given to the Holy Spirit dwelling in the minds of good people! And we certainly can believe that this sorrow brought on the deaths of many godly people. The father certainly sensed the greatness of this wound and he understood that he was guilty of such great wickedness that he was the source of these evils and that he was cursed. Anathema on the "avenging spirit" of the people of God! And it was not easy for him to struggle out of this grief, since he keenly felt the wrath of God. But he finally conquered, aided by the Messiah, as he cries in Ps. 2[:12], "Blessed are all they who put their trust in Him."

I am citing these examples in order that the knowledge of such great evils may arouse fear of the wrath of God in us, and that each of us may guard against offenses in his own mind and remember that in one sin many others are involved, and that in the very punishments we pile up even more sins. "Despise nothing small," says Hippocrates. And Thucydides says of the problems which come from wars, "Many come from few." These points are even truer with regard to the sins of men, but human self-confidence does not recognize the greatness of its own miseries and of the wrath of God. Thus it is true that we are not only instructed by His Word but also by the very tragic punishments which befall us, so that in one way or another we come to recognize His judgment and begin to fear Him and to be admonished by the voice of God and our own calamities. In no other way can we struggle out of the darkness.

Moreover, offenses in doctrine do more harm than derelictions in morals, as when in the beginning the devil gave a deadly wound to Eve by filling her head with a false persuasion. And in all ages since that time the authors of ungodly ideas of this kind have done terrible damage to the church, as when they taught that idols were to be worshiped or spread blasphemous notions and heresies. What regiments of souls have Arius, the Manichaeans, and many other heretics dragged into eternal destruction!

No human mind can even imagine the magnitude of the evils which in these days of the world have arisen from Mohammed, and from the popes who have perverted the Supper of the Lord, established the invocation of the dead, permitted the Gospel of faith and true invocation of Christ to be overgrown with false notions, and defended the law of celibacy of priests and the concept of monastic vows.

The one law of celibacy—what damage it has inflicted on the consciences of many people, so that they cannot even call upon God! And among these are many who are burdened down with fears regarding their eternal damnation. And more recently the poison of the Anabaptists has misled many people and still misleads them.

The mention of these horrible examples needs to be made in order that good minds may consider that not only examples of evil morals are offenses, but also that false ideas are stumbling blocks condemned by God and to be carefully avoided. Christ speaks about both kinds [Matt. 18:7], "Woe to the man through whom comes offense." Not only is it a matter of human diligence to avoid foolish errors in doctrine, but with our ardent prayers we must constantly ask God that He would rule our minds with the light of His Holy Spirit, so that we not become trapped in error, as the prophet prays in the entire 119th Psalm, and note [v. 34], "Give me understanding and I shall keep Your law, and observe it with my whole heart." And Christ says in Matt. 26[:41], "Watch and pray that you do not enter into temptation."

Up to this point I have spoken of the necessity of doing certain things and avoiding certain things, but I have not yet spoken of matters of indifference (adiaphora). It is manifest that true doctrine must of necessity be set forth, and we must not keep silent about it because of offending the ungodly. Thus the godly priest takes an honorable wife and is not deterred by Pharisaic offenses.

But here we must add the third rule regarding matters of adiaphora, such as the eating of meat on the sixth day and similar useless rites. In regard to such things we must believe this:

First, we must set forth the doctrine which shows the true worship of God, which attacks false forms, and which shows the reason for our freedom in matters of adiaphora. Those who have not learned the reason for our liberty, and who still think that these rituals are worship, violate these traditions with very doubting consciences. But all doubt of conscience hinders prayer. Therefore, among those who have not heard the doctrine and are upright men and teachable, we must not suddenly change the practice. First it is useful to teach them, as Paul says [Rom. 14:1]: "Take the person who is weak in faith under your care, and do not cause him to doubt," that is, you should instruct and strengthen teachable men who have embraced the Gospel but still have some doubts on these matters of worship, so that they may come to understand that they are not sinning in setting aside these rituals. They should be built up lest, if they do set them aside with some doubt, their consciences may flee God and their faith be destroyed and prayer neglected. But when the time comes when it is useful to make changes, then it is the judgment of a godly mind, as long as all heedlessness is removed.

After the teaching of true and false worship and liberty has been set forth, now we must give the reason for these examples, to show that these useless rituals ought to be set aside and stubborn clinging to them no longer applauded in the case of those people who, although they understand what the true teaching is, still stubbornly insist upon all the rituals.

This kind of stubbornness is a many-faceted offense. It confirms the enemies of the true doctrine and leads into doubt the weaker people who already fear that the use of this liberty will not be allowed to them,

and who put this fear above the doctrine or its authority. In the meantime, the Holy Spirit is grieved over the weaker ones when they lament that they are accused of inconstancy. In regard to this point, it is profitable to tell the story which we find in the fifth book of Eusebius.

A noble couple, Attalus and Blandina, had been imprisoned in Lyons because of their profession of the Gospel, and they were being repeatedly led to the places of punishment so that they might be moved to give up calling upon Christ. There was also with them in the prison another godly Christian who disciplined himself with remarkable exercises, and used no wine or meat. At this point Attalus was commanded by divine revelation to speak to this very rigorous man and say to him that he should eat with the rest of the people and not give an example to the others of being something special. And the reason for this command was also given, namely, that those who were less educated might think that this distinction of food was a higher form of worship of God, an error which had to be opposed rather than approved. Attalus told this revelation to the rigorist and to the others in the prison, and the man obeyed him. The others were instructed by this word and made stronger. This story gives us a very important reason why the stubbornness of those who actually understand the distinction in worship forms must not be given approval, lest the errors and doubts in the ignorant and the weak be made worse.

Now, although this hardness sometimes is a kind of image of earnestness, yet often the man who in other instances has good reasons is not rendering a service to God, but is actually seeking the blessing of powers which are opposed to the Gospel.

Much greater sinners are those people who connive with the enemies of the Gospel and oppress those who are teachers of the truth, using their knowledge to hinder the free course of the Gospel and demonstrating that they desire and await a different status for the church. People like this in times of controversy want to appear as impartial judges, attached to neither party—men of integrity and above corruption. But they need to remember the word of Christ [Luke 11:23], "He who does not gather with Me scatters."

In controversies in civil life it can happen that you do not take on yourself the judgment of supporting either side, for there is no need for individuals to understand things which pertain to other people. There was no need for Pomponius Atticus to inquire of both Pompey and Julius which side had the better of the argument. But in controversies about doctrine it is necessary for individual godly people to make a judgment, to cling to and confess the truth, according to the statements [Gal. 1:9], "If anyone teaches any other Gospel, let him be anathema;" [Matt. 10:32], "He who confesses Me before men, him will I confess before My Father, who is in heaven."

Men of good intention ought to think about such things and be concerned about their own confession, and carry out their duties and see to it that the teachers of the church teach correctly. They must give an honorable standing to this present status of the church, as the saying goes, "I honor Sparta, where I was born." They must not play around with the enemies of the church, not be looking for another church in their minds or a different ministry, as long as they know that their church is teaching correctly. God wills that we love the church which teaches correctly and proclaim our moral support for it; He wills that the minister of the Gospel be held in honor and supported financially, as the Psalm [122:6] says, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." And it goes on to speak of financial remuneration: "May those who love you prosper."

Although it is manifest that the use of idols and other errors is defended by the enemies of our churches, it is necessary to flee idols. It is evident that this point is properly taught in our churches and that the worship of idols has been removed, and that these churches encourage piety and that piety is very much a part of their belief. We must avoid offenses of every kind, but not in order that under the pretext of the Gospel we may keep room for our private ideas, nor to hold in check those who teach correctly, nor to hinder the studies of godly doctrine. Just as bees in their little honey combs individually perform work for the common good, so we must each use all our zeal and the powers of our offices for the salvation and tranquillity of the churches which teach correctly. We must support godly studies in order that our posterity may be instructed in the pure doctrine of God and of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Second Commandment it is said, "The Lord will not hold innocent him who takes His name in vain." Therefore, there is no doubt that all who have inflicted offenses on the Gospel will receive punishments from God. And in these last times, amidst this great confusion of opinions and governments, it is absolutely necessary that we be circumspect and vigilant. We must apply to ourselves this word of Christ [Matt. 26:41]: "Watch and pray that you do not enter into temptation." And we must sustain ourselves with this comfort that, at the same time, Christ also said [Luke 22:31–2], "Simon, Satan has asked for you that he may sift you as wheat and scatter you. But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail." I pray You, O Son of God, Jesus Christ, crucified for us and raised again—have mercy on us, and by Your Holy Spirit kindle the true light in our hearts, and increase and rule our behavior and our studies.

Locus 24
Christian Liberty

If one of the princes of Babylon had heard the Jews in exile glorying in the fact that they had been divinely given their liberty, he would have said that this was a sign of their insanity. So also in our time, in the midst of these tragic ruins, when slavery is on the increase in many places, when thousands of godly people are being carried away daily by the Turks before our very eyes, and when in many places unjust savagery is being inflicted on pious people, I think we would be ridiculed by people when we still speak of our liberty and make glorious statements about our freedom. Therefore, we must first confess that we also mourn over the plight of the church of God, which is being oppressed in these fierce and tyrannical times, and in the midst of this confusion of kingdoms.

And even when the church has been supported by more favorable governments, it has always been tormented by the devil and still is burdened down with many calamities and death, even in this life. How great were the sorrows of Adam and Eve when they saw the murders and crimes of their offspring, even though royal empires and tyrants had not yet arisen! The church of God has always been under oppression and in great miseries, and it will continue to be until the resurrection.

What is this thing which we call liberty? Is it merely an empty word, like some paradox of the Stoics or some foolishness of those who say that only the wise are free? Far different is the doctrine of the Gospel concerning freedom, of which Christ speaks when He says [John 8:36], "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." Indeed, He says, you shall be free not with some empty title or the appearance of liberty, but with true freedom. When sin is destroyed, the wrath of God appeased, death abolished, and all human calamities removed, you will be given eternal righteousness, light, life, and glory.

Christ includes the concept of complete liberty, which He Himself brings and prepares for His church by His death. To be sure, this pure freedom does indeed begin in this life, but in the resurrection it will be complete. When all evils have been destroyed, then the church will enjoy an eternal and beautiful relationship with God and our Savior, Jesus Christ. We must keep in mind this eternal and complete liberty whenever we hear the word "liberty," and at the same time remember that this begins in this life. But we must get rid of the dreams of political and physical liberty, of worldly empires, as the Jews still hold regarding the liberation and restoration of the kingdom in Palestine. These dreams have nothing to do with this doctrine which the Gospel sets forth when it talks of liberty.

Although the church in this life not only is held in bondage by governments, but is also tormented with great calamities of other kinds, yet the doctrine of liberty gives the greatest comfort in these evils. Hercules, Priam, Agamemnon, Palamedes, Cato, Cicero, Brutus, and countless others who did not know God were afflicted. But they succumbed to their troubles, and they did not have God mitigating the outcomes or strengthening their minds. They were pressed down under eternal despair and eternal darkness regarding the providence and the righteousness of God. But Joseph, David, Jonathan, Hezekiah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, and Paul, even when they were afflicted, could still discern the presence of God, who strengthened their minds and often softened the outcome for them. And whenever they were pressed down, their sufferings were sooner or later of benefit to the church, since they knew that after this life in the resurrection they would have eternal glory. Thus in this life they have the beginning of liberty, because they have been accepted by God, are guided by Him, defended and aided, and realize that after this life they will have complete liberty. Now understand how great a blessing it is, what great liberty it is—even in the midst of troubles and in the midst of death—to have a God who is favorable toward us—our helper, our guide, and our protector. This statement about liberty sets forth true and certain things which have clear testimonies in the church and which the church, you and I, and all the godly experience. It does not offer to us the empty dreams of the Jews or the Stoics or the Anabaptists, or of Struthius, who tried to free the people from paying taxes.

I am dividing the subject of evangelical liberty into four degrees or grades, in keeping with our common way of speaking.

The first is: Just as the greatest evils are sin and the wrath of God, so it is necessary to speak first about this degree and how we are to be liberated from these evils. Therefore the first degree of liberty is that, for the sake of the Son of God, there is freely given to us the remission of sins, reconciliation, justification or imputation of righteousness, acceptance to eternal life, and the inheritance of everlasting life.

This is liberty because, for the sake of Christ, these great blessings are freely and surely given to us. God wants us to determine for ourselves and to believe that when we repent, we are received into His grace, our prayers are heard, and we are freely saved for the sake of His Son, even if the Law and our own reason accuse us and hold us back so that we do not accept these blessings. Therefore, we are liberated from sin, from the wrath of God, from eternal damnation, from the Law which accuses us, and from the condition of merit. And another thing has been set forth and given

to us, on account of which we receive the remission of sins and are justified, that is, we are pronounced as accepted by God. That other thing is the Son of God, the mediator, not the Law, and not our merits. Those who have been reconciled are declared as righteous, that is, accepted by God to eternal life, even if they fall far short of the perfection of the Law, but for the sake of Christ and by faith. What a great blessing that although the remnants of sin still cling to those who have been reconciled, and although we are weighed down by a great mountain of shameful sins, yet we are pleasing to God for the sake of Christ, as if we had absolutely and perfectly satisfied the Law.

Paul is preaching about this degree of liberty when he says [Gal. 3:13], "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us." This is a short statement, but it far surpasses the wisdom of all men and angels. The true, great, and unspeakable wrath of God against sin is signified when the Son upon whom this wrath was poured is called a curse. He was made for us a ransom and a victim. We must give thought to this blessing and this liberty every time we call upon God, and determine in faith that for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ our sins are truly forgiven, covered, and buried, and that He truly wills to save, receive, and hear us for the sake of the mediator. In these exercises of prayer, our understanding increases daily regarding this liberty of which we have spoken under the first degree, which contains the doctrine of justification, which we have fully described above.

The second degree or grade is the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, who kindles new light in our minds and new movements in our will and heart, guides us, and begins eternal life in us. Although this second degree is connected with the first, for the sake of clear teaching I am making a distinction so that as often as we speak about liberation from the Law, we may understand not only help, as Augutine says repeatedly, but also the free imputation of righteousness.

Augustine often says that we are liberated from the Law, meaning that by the bestowal of the Holy Spirit we are helped so that we are obedient to the Law, nor do we any longer strive in vain under the coercion of the Law. He is correct when he speaks about this help, but it necessary that we also see a second benefit, namely, the free remission of sins and the imputation of righteousness which is given to us for the sake of Christ. This enormous gift must be seen, so that honor may be given to Christ and our consciences may hold on to true and firm comfort and can invoke God.

Moreover, Christ speaks about both degrees of liberty when He says [John 8:36], "If the Son shall make you free, you will be free indeed." Indeed He is talking about the complete benefit: the Son assuages the wrath of God, takes away sin and death, gives righteousness and eternal life, and raises us to eternal glory and joy which we enjoy in the comfort of God, the angels, and the whole church. This total liberty is the blessing of which Christ is speaking, which also here in this life must be begun.

While we are still in subjection to the cross and mortal death, we are being exercised in great calamities, and sins and great darkness still cling to us. We are under attack by the devil, who constantly ties us up in his evil traps. And no one is so careful, so diligent, that he does not from time to time wander into thoughts about these things. And we ourselves cannot govern the very difficult and perilous course of this life and our calling only by human actions and diligence, as Jeremiah says [10:23], "I know, Lord, that the way of man is not in himself."

Although we see ourselves still shut up in this sad prison, yet we are free, first because it is a certainty that we, for the sake of Christ, have a God who is propitious toward us and our defender, as the first degree of liberty teaches us. Then, because we are helped and guided by the Holy Spirit. David was caught in an evil from which he could not extricate himself when he was exiled from his kingdom, and yet in this he sustained himself with the sure comfort that he had not been cast off by God. And he remembered the word of Nathan [2 Sam. 12:13], "The Lord has taken away your sin." Then he sought the aid and guidance of the Holy Spirit, and experienced the fact that he was indeed helped by God. But Themistocles, when he was exiled from Greece, knew none of these consolations, and to the extent that he did have some place of refuge and human protection, he endured his exile with a peaceful mind.

All the saints have learned the second degree of liberty in times of danger, when they experienced the fact that they were helped and strengthened by God, just as Stephen in his confession and in the agony of death, Lawrence, and many others in their confession.

Therefore, when we consider our weakness and our dangers, we also should give thought to this second degree and we should seek the aid and guidance of the Holy Spirit, as Christ commands when He says [John 16:24], "Ask and you shall receive." Again, [Matt. 11:28], "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." When we call upon Him without any doubting, we are assured that we are being aided, guided with His counsel, our death protected, dangers dispelled, and our troubles alleviated.

These exercises in prayer will teach us about this second degree of liberty. Now, these two grades teach us how great the blessings of God are. For they are liberations from the greatest of evils, from sin, from the wrath of God, and from eternal death. They include the giving of righteousness and eternal life, defense against the devils, guidance in all matters and dangers, with the Holy Spirit ruling our heart and kindling in us the understanding of the Word of God. Finally, they include the presence of the eternal God, who holds us in His arms for the sake of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is nothing greater or better than these gifts.

And thus this liberty imparted to us through the blood of Christ, which offers the Gospel, is a great and immeasurable gift. It is not a mere empty word or some product of Stoic imagination, as ungodly men think.

Nor is it difficult for sound and godly minds to see the distinction between this liberation from sin and the wrath of God on the one hand, and civil liberty or liberation from tribute on the other. For nothing is being said about external political tranquillity or servitude in these first two degrees. Joseph had these two degrees of liberty of soul even though he had been convicted and put in prison. Daniel had them while he sat among the lions. Lawrence did too while he was lying on the gridiron. For political liberty or servitude in no way pertains to these two degrees any more than the strength or weakness of the body, as it says in Gal. 3[:26, 28], "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus . . . there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave or free man." But it is easy for godly people to understand this: some things are a blessing for the soul, and other different things are good for the body.

The third grade or degree of liberty deals with our outward or political life, namely, that Christians are not bound to the civil order of Moses or that of any other nation, but in our various places we owe obedience to the present rulers and the laws, as long as the laws are in harmony with the law of nature and do not compel us to do something contrary to the commandments of God. Just as we observe the intervals of days and nights in other regions, so it is permitted to utilize other forms of the office of rulers, governments, and laws, so long as the laws, as I said, do not prescribe things to be done which are in conflict with the mandates of God.

The uneducated should be instructed in regard to this third kind of liberty, because it has often happened that very pernicious rebellions have been created by the unlearned who have contended that Christians must be governed by the laws of Moses. This error must be opposed, for the prophets, Christ, and the apostles clearly teach that the end of the Jewish political state would come after the suffering and death of Christ. And the very ruins of Jerusalem bear witness that the political nation of the Jews was destroyed 1470 years ago. On this basis, this rule instructs us that the ceremonial laws of Moses have been abrogated and that the civil laws of Moses do not pertain to the church of Christ. These civil arrangements pertained to a particular race and were to continue for a specific time, but they do not pertain to other races or to other times. These points are confirmed by many passages of Scripture, such as Acts 10[:35] and Gal. 3[:28] and 5[:6], "In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision or non-circumcision is of value, but faith which works through love."

But this question is being asked: when we speak of the abrogation of the law, is the entire law said to be abrogated, or only two parts, namely, the ceremonial and the civil? And the moral law is a heavier burden and a harsher prison than those external ceremonies.

My reply is that in regard to the ceremonial and civil laws the response is not difficult. Just as at Athens the tables of Solon or at Rome the laws of the decemviri [councils of 10 Roman magistrates], which were changed by the Republic, were ultimately abolished, so the ceremonies and civil laws which were laid down by Moses endured for a specific time, but when the political nation of Moses was destroyed, they were no longer binding on anyone, and now have become extinct. We have spoken above regarding the distinction of the old and new covenants, and why this civil state was established.

But in regard to the moral law, the answer which Christ and the apostles gave is more difficult, and worldly men who live without repentance do not understand it. For the moral law is not something changeable, as the ceremonial laws or the laws of the decemviri, but the moral law is the eternal and immutable rule in the divine mind which commands that certain things be done and not done, and which punishes infractions against it.

Just as this proposition is eternal and immutable: God is wise, good, and just, so these propositions are eternal and immutable: God judges that it was just or righteous for Him as the Creator to be loved by a rational creature and placed above all other things; God judges that the roving lusts of men are evil; God approves obedience which is in accord with His commands; God is angry at refusal to obey.

Therefore, this rule always remains: both that the moral law always remains as the order of the divine mind, so that the creature is to be obedient to it; and that the entire law obligates men either to obedience or punishment.

Since men did not render this obedience, it was necessary either that they become subject to punishment, or that another person pay their penalty or ransom. Thus with marvelous and indescribable wisdom the Son of God paid the ransom for us and intercedes for us and takes upon Himself God's wrath, which we were obligated to endure. Thus it was not without payment that God mitigated His Law, but rather He preserved His justice in requiring that the penalty be paid. And therefore Christ says [Matt. 5:17], "I have not come to destroy the Law but to fulfill it," that is, by enduring the punishment for the human race and teaching and restoring it [the Law] in believers. It is difficult to explain this matter, but I pray the godly that they spend time considering these things which I am saying. And since Christ has paid this ransom, we are free from the Law for His sake, that is, that we should no longer remain under the curse as long as we apply His benefit to ourselves by faith.

Therefore, Paul explicitly says that we are freed from the curse of the Law, that is, that Christ has paid the ransom. Our sins have not been remitted by some change in the will of God without cause, but a great

compensation has intervened because of the righteousness of God. Thus the first patriarchs, even before Moses—people such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and then Moses, Samuel, David, and the Baptist—all believed that their sins were remitted to them and that they were accepted by God for the sake of the Son of God and not because of the Law. They believed that they had been reconciled (even though they were still not without sins) and were pleasing to God because they had been freed from the Law for the sake of the Son, who they knew was going to pay the ransom, just as the Baptist said [John 1:29], "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world," that is, the victim who has been destined by God. This is the abrogation of the moral law, of which Paul is speaking so clearly when he says that through Christ we have been redeemed from the curse of the Law. Thus we are liberated, if we take to ourselves by faith this benefit of Christ.

This teaching instructs us about two matters—about the wrath of God against sin, which is not remitted without payment, and about the marvelous benefit of Christ. God has always hated sin, but because He has poured out His wrath upon His Son, He receives us. For the Law requires, as I have said, that the obedience to the Law or the punishment for our disobedience be paid by the Son.

Now I shall reply to the principal question. We have been liberated from the curse of the moral law because the Son paid the ransom, and for the sake of the Son we are received by God. God's eternal and immutable order remains in force, that the creature is to render obedience to God the creator. The Law does not accuse or condemn those who have been reconciled, but the order or arrangement remains in the mind of God and in our mind that we are to render obedience to God. In regard to this statement it is said: the Law has been abrogated as it pertains to the curse, but not as it pertains to obedience. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is given, in order that emotions may be truly kindled in our hearts which are in agreement with the Law of God, as it says in 2 Cor. 3[:18], "We with unveiled face behold the glory of the Lord and are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

From these points it is possible to understand the statement of Paul [Rom. 6:14], "You are not under the Law, but under grace." Because the punishment has been transferred onto Christ, believers are liberated from wrath and now for the sake of Christ are righteous and have been accepted by God, even if the remnants of sin by which they contend against the Spirit still cling to them. This is said [1 Tim. 1:9], "The Law was not laid down for a righteous person," where it is clear that Paul by this statement is speaking about discipline, and is saying that the Law was laid down for the unrighteous, adulterers, murderers, etc., so that they might be held in check by it, accused, and punished. By this discipline and this forcible control the righteous man, that is, the person who has been born again of the Holy Spirit, is not to be held in check, but he is governed by the Holy Spirit, through the light of the Word of God, to whom he understands that the rational creature has been placed in subjection. And in this passage by Paul the stress is on the words "laid down." The Law does not press down or run over a righteous man.

The fourth degree or level of liberty, which the Gospel calls rites that have been developed by human authority in the church, pertains to matters of adiaphora which do not merit the remission of sins. It does not refer to the righteousness of the Gospel, and these [rites] must not be observed out of an idea of necessity, since they can be omitted without any cause for offense. This is clearly taught in the statements [Matt. 15:9], "In vain do they worship Me with the commandments of men," and again [Col. 2:16], "Let no one accuse you in matters of food, drink. . . . "

I have spoken above of the errors which the hypocrites add to these human traditions, errors which we must refute and which pertain to this degree or level of liberty in the church. God wills that He and His will be understood from His Word, and He does not grant to us permission to think up ideas by our own volition, as the Gentiles and idol worshipers in all ages have done. For this is the source of many errors—when men think that it is permitted to them to devise notions about God and zealously (in their opinion) to establish worship forms concerning God. The Thebans thought that it was a godly thing to seek from God a rich grape harvest, and therefore they established the Bacchanalian rituals. The Sicilians thought it was a godly thing to ask that there be favorable harvests, and thus they worshiped Ceres and her daughter. The Romans thought it was a godly thing to ask for victory in wars, and therefore they worshiped Mars. And these cults piled up.

All these errors come from one source. Men think that they are permitted to devise for themselves of their own free choice opinions about God, and worship Him according to those opinions, just as Aaron thought when he set up the worship of the image of the calf, and as Jereboam did when he brazenly led the people of Israel away from the temple of God to his own sacrifices.

The wise men cry: what is wrong about this? Why should honest practices not be permitted? What else did the Gentiles or Aaron or Jereboam want than that the knowledge of God be kept alive, so that the people might be invited to invoke Him and become accustomed to good spiritual exercises which lead to godly works? These specious and logical-sounding arguments have always deceived, do so now, and always will deceive the human race.

Thus in our own time the wise men are reasoning: what is wrong with the idea that Christ is offered by many and by individuals? Or that we offer prayers for the living and the dead? Or that a part of the Sacrament

is carried around? The prayers of the people are increased and the Sacrament given more honor. What is wrong with asking the dead, who are living in the presence of God, to intercede for us? There is surely no doubt that the entire church in heaven and on earth always joins together in prayer. These are beautiful arguments and can be ornamented with much eloquence.

But these lovely rationalizations and specious arguments lead people away from the Word of God. Indeed, games of this kind are forbidden by God. For with the same audacity they dream up their heretical errors—some, one kind, and others, other kinds. Indeed, despite their conscience struggling over the remission of sins and the will of God in times of great calamities, they become so accustomed to following these rationalizations and opinions that they lose the true consolations which have been given us by God.

Men in civil life tell us that conflicts which are destructive for inexperienced people are often caused by very simple things. Discords hang on and increase by reason of the zeal and hatreds of factions. Men do not disagree with moderation. Therefore, they say, why do you stir up such sad tragedies about things like milk, eggs, and the eating of meat? Why do you not put the public peace and tranquillity ahead of these minute things?

The answer is true and solid. We are not contending about unimportant matters, but about many very important things, namely, the true knowledge and worship of God, which must be put ahead of our very life, all our physical comforts, governments, and the public concord, so that we do not look for opinions about God and His will outside of the Word which He has given us, as the Gentiles have done and all fanatic spirits, such as Paul of Samosta, Arius, the Manichaeans, Pelagius, and Mohammed.

This kind of uproar when people set forth these controversial matters is reprehensible, and yet it is common. From these same dark corners arise the Bacchanalia, the errors of Paul of Samosata, the rules of the Manichaeans regarding food, the law of the papists regarding the celibacy of priests, and the brazen temerity of the sacrificial system with its sale of masses and the invocation of the dead.

God wills that our minds be bound to His Word, and when we depart from this, unspeakable madness and idolatry follow. Thus we must contend regarding this rule so that there be no departure from the Word of God. Therefore, we need to give instruction to the church about this matter, which is most important of all and indeed is given by divine mandate. Note the statement [Gal. 1:9], "If anyone teaches any other Gospel, let him be anathema."

Furthermore, the civil leaders in their wisdom select things which appear to be unimportant, such as the eating of meat or eggs, and they assert that the public concord ought to be placed above these matters. But we are not contending only about such minutia as the eating of meat and the like. I have said that the church needs to be instructed regarding the source of these errors, that is, regarding the audacity of mankind departing from the Word of God and devising not only laws about foods (although these by themselves have spawned a multitude of errors), but also about much more evident idolatry, such as the saying of masses for the living and the dead, the invocation of the dead, the laws of celibacy, and other things. Nor is this the end of the insanity. Now the Anabaptists are thinking up still more new opinions and rituals. Thus the doctrine of this fourth degree or level of liberty is necessary for the church, and the church must carefully consider the reason why this admonition is necessary, and why it must not depart from the Word of God. "Your Word is a light to my feet," says the prophet [Ps. 119:105].

It is easy to fall into this. In the beginning it is not noticed when our minds begin to depart from this light and take up human opinions which strengthen idolatry and seek compelling reasons for their actions. Paul himself says they have the appearance of wisdom, while actually they are false. What forbids, they say, the whole church in heaven and on earth from joining with us in praying to God that He would not allow the true doctrine to be snuffed out, but rather that He would gather the church for Himself and rule it, call His saints [in heaven]—who rejoice in their happy relationship with God—together before His throne, and encourage them to join their prayers to ours. Surely they know that this is the will of pious men. They say these things very plausibly, but what great evil this idea produces!

To hear the prayers of individuals and to behold the movements of their hearts belongs to God alone, or to His almighty nature, as is clearly stated in 2 Chron. 6[:30], "You alone know the hearts of the sons of men." To the dead they attribute the honor of calling together the individual saints. Then they add an even greater lunacy: they dream up the notion that the dead themselves are our helpers, and they attribute different gifts to some of them, just as the Gentiles seek riches from Juno, wisdom from Pallas Athene, happy love affairs from Venus, victories from Mars, and other favors from other gods. In this way we pile up sins, when at the beginning we seem not to have departed far from the Word of God because of their very plausible line of reasoning. But it is evident that there is no example of the invocation of the dead in the writings of the prophets and apostles. We must use these rules in opposition to the beautiful excuses with which certain very astute people in our time are painting idolatry, just as in ancient times at the festivals they painted the statues: "The dwarf-elders drip with Bacchanalian blood and are reddened with wine" [Virgil, *Eclog.* 10.27].

I have said that we must carefully instruct the learned, so that they do not allow themselves to be carried away by these specious excuses and depart from the truth into idolatry. For if these outrageous tricks

are permitted to lead us into excusing our idolatry, what confusions there will be in our religion! I shudder to think of these tricks of the devil. And because no amount of human diligence can sufficiently guard against this witchcraft, I pray our Lord Jesus Christ, who was crucified and resurrected again for us, that He Himself will defend the purity of His Gospel and destroy every idol and guide our minds that we may teach and contend for true and salutary things.

Now to the common argument I reply to the usual objection:

We must be obedient to the necessary power.

The power of the church has instituted rites for both matters of indifference (adiaphora) and for other things.

Therefore it is necessary that we observe these rituals, especially in matters of adiaphora.

We must respond to the major premise, which is not true when the power commands that we teach ungodly things or do them. For then it is necessary to oppose these rules [Acts 5:29], "We must obey God rather than men." In the first place, therefore, when the traditions openly command those things which cannot be performed without sin, it is evident that they are the doctrines of devils and we must not be obedient to them, but come back to the commands of God. Such are many of the traditions of the pope, such as the abuses of the Lord's Supper, the invocation of the dead, and the law of celibacy. These traditions must be rejected and we must be obedient to the commandments of God. The First Commandment says [Ex. 20:3], "You shall have no other gods." Therefore do not invoke the dead, but call upon the almighty God, the creator of all things, who has revealed Himself in the giving of the Gospel and the sending of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who was crucified and raised again for us. Thus you are to invoke Him, as He Himself teaches us to pray in confidence in the Son, our mediator.

Then, when the traditions speak about things which by nature are matters of adiaphora, these matters still become the ungodly doctrines of devils because of the errors which are set forth and defended at the same time with them. One error is that they merit the remission of sins or are the worship of God, that is, works by which God judges that He is being honored. Also, the error is defended that bishops have the power to establish such worship. We must attack these errors. For example, we must oppose them in order that the church may understand that we must not depart from the Word of God nor let down the reins of human brashness, so that men get the notion that they can devise opinions and forms of worship according to their own free choice. For these reasons Christ absolves the apostles of violating the tradition of the Pharisees in Matthew 15.

This first solution to the matter is perfectly clear and plain. But we must also cling to the second solution, which is also true and well-founded. The major premise is true as it pertains to the obedience that the Gospel teaches. In those things which are matters of the divine Law, the conscience must be obedient to the pastors [the seventy] according to the statement [Luke 10:16], "He who rejects you rejects Me." But in regard to rites which are matters of adiaphora established for the sake of good order, the Gospel prescribes that we should not believe that these things are worship or necessary things. But it does permit us to observe them without the idea of righteousness or necessity. Human authority cannot abolish this divinely-given belief. Therefore, when the bishops give us a precept, it must call for the kind of obedience which does not destroy a belief required of us by God.

These replies are correct and immovable, and they are not in conflict with the word of Christ [Matt. 23:2, 3], "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. All things which they command you, do."

For this statement does not command that you do or believe something contrary to the commandment of God. Indeed, in another passage [Matt. 16:5] He commands, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees." And in Matthew 15 human traditions which are corruptions of the divine laws are expressly rejected. Paul says [Gal. 1:9], "If anyone teaches any other Gospel, let him be anathema." In no way were they to embrace the interpretations of the Pharisees, which had the idea that the Levitical sacrifices merited the remission of sins, or that the Messiah was not going to be a sacrifice for sins but rather would take hold of the empires of the world and would bestow the governance of them upon the Jews. They surely were not to take up such ridiculous notions. And we must not disregard the statement of Christ concerning traditions or opinions which are in conflict with the Word of God.

But now these things are being described as some kind of detraction from the authority of ministers and pastors of the Gospel. Actually their authority is being strengthened. We affirm that of necessity we must render obedience to those teachers who teach correctly in all the matters which are matters of divine Law, as it is said [Luke 10:16], "He who hears you hears Me." But this statement cannot be transferred to opinions or laws which are in conflict with the Gospel, or which establish a kingdom outside of the Gospel. Then we also add this point when, for the sake of good order, they divide up the seasons of the church year and the readings, and say that these must be observed as a rite in order to avoid scandal. But especially we who are in churches which have been reformed must remember to whom the honor is owed by the ministry of the Gospel.

This ministry is the chief blessing of God, and it has been restored with marvelous miracles of God and defended among the human race. God wills that His Gospel be proclaimed in the public assembly and honorable meetings, as it is written [Ps. 149:1], "His praise in the congregation of the saints." He wills that His

name be invoked in that place and celebrated in regular meetings. And He adds the promise to the congregation [Matt. 18:20], "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." And again [v. 19], "If two of you on earth shall agree on a certain matter which you shall ask, it shall be done for you by My heavenly Father." For He wills that these public meetings themselves be public testimonies of your confessions. He also wills that we all understand the difference between the true church, which retains the Gospel, and the meetings of other sects.

And the public gatherings of the church are necessary for the retention of the ministry of the Gospel. Thus in the churches which teach correctly, all must both love and support the public meetings, and be obedient to their pastors who teach correctly, who observe the church year and the readings. As often as you come into the church building, you should think of the marvelous blessing of God, who gathers to Himself the eternal church by means of the ministry and the word of the Gospel. At the same time instruct yourself regarding the whole doctrine of the creation and redemption of the human race, and remember the promise given regarding the presence of God. In this gathering God wills to be invoked and to answer our prayers. Here you should show in your worship and in the use of the sacraments that you are a member of the people of God and a hearer of Christ. And at the same time repeat to yourself the word which I wish were inscribed on the walls of all church buildings [Rom. 8:30]: "Those whom He chose, He also called." None have been elected outside this assembly of the called. Do not seek the people of God anywhere except among those who have been called.

Moreover, the called are the members (*socii*) of this assembly which hears the Gospel, and who through the sacraments are joined to this gathering. What a great comfort it is for the pious mind to know that only in these assemblies are the heirs of eternal life—nowhere else! Therefore give thanks to the eternal God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He has called you to the knowledge of the Gospel and to these gatherings and meetings. And in every work of these assemblies or congregations you should give frequent help and protection. Love those pastors who teach correctly, and give them reverent obedience in their performance of their office. Be kind to them, and support their bodily needs where this is necessary. Pious people should think about these matters and be truly eager to perform them.

Likewise, with regard to the schools in which the word of the Gospel is proclaimed, we should believe and know that God wishes that they be gatherings of those who teach and those who learn. They are a part of the church, in which many have been chosen as heirs of eternal life. Taken from this very assembly are the teachers through whom God preserves the public ministry of the Gospel. Christ reigns at the right hand of the eternal Father in order that He may give gifts to men, pastors, and teachers; therefore He is present also in this very gathering of godly scholars, and from this number He chooses and prepares by the Holy Spirit godly students, that they may serve His church and promote the spreading of the Gospel. Therefore, we should love and support these congregations and help their meetings, which truly give us instruction concerning eternal life.

For measureless eternity will be the normal place where the church will gather to hear the wisdom of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, and for mutual conversation with the first patriarchs, the prophets and apostles, and the others in whose preaching we have rejoiced. Indeed, as often as we are present in the meetings of the church or the schools, we should be hopeful that as quickly as possible that most happy day will dawn in which the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, will raise the dead and show to us this universal gathering of His church and His school.

Appendix
Marriage[1]

The entire counsel of God cannot be interpreted from creation, but yet God willed that at least the cause of His workings be seen, namely, the cause of His precepts. It is absolutely certain that angels and men were made in order that there might be some beings to whom He might communicate His wisdom, righteousness, other virtues, and eternal happiness (because to communicate oneself is a good thing), and also in order that He might be known. Therefore He poured into the human mind a wisdom which is in agreement with His own mind, so that there might exist in us a testimony that there is a God, what His nature is like, and that He is a judge. In this working the counsel of God is very clear.

But we must not inquire about the causes of all things, and we must reverently submit to God. He created the hosts of angels at the same time, but they do not possess the power of procreation. He made man different and has willed that man increase from a few to many by propagation. He created two in the beginning, because it was always His will that the church should be a collective entity, and He willed that in these people there shine forth an understanding of good actions, righteousness, truth, chastity, kindness, and other virtues, because by these signs He wills that the divine nature be distinguished from unrighteousness and unclean natures. For we do not embrace God with the arms of our body, but we must look upon Him in prayer with our mind and with faith. Since He has granted to us these virtues, we must distinguish Him from other things, and we must observe the testimonies to His revelation.

Chastity also produces a very clear distinction, because the devil and men are unclean. And in order that a person may distinguish God from devils, he must always understand in prayer that he is speaking with a chaste God.

Therefore, God has established order and prohibited wandering lusts. He punishes them severely, and wills that men know and reverently observe the definite laws of marriage which have been given by Him, the first of which were already set forth in paradise. The first regulation is that marriage be the indissoluble union of one man and one woman. The two will be one flesh, that is, one husband and one wife are inseparably joined together. In this ordinance it is clear that all unrestrained lusts are prohibited. The second ordinance is that [Gen. 2:24] "a man shall leave his father and his mother and cleave to his wife." Later on, other ordinances are added by the voice of God concerning incest.

Therefore, lawful marriage is the indissoluble union of one man and one woman, as established by God, in order that we may understand that God has a chaste mind and that we are to serve Him in chastity. In this way the human race is to be propagated and the eternal church gathered to God. Indeed, the first church was that first society of the two in marriage.

The Parts of the Definition

The first term in the definition is the expression "lawful union." It involves four restrictions, about which the laws of God speak and hence also human laws, to which truly belong worthy reverence and authority. The laws deal with the persons, the consent, the conditions, and straying from these ordinances.

The First Restriction: Concerning the Persons

We should especially note Leviticus 18 in which are recorded the persons whom it is not permissible to marry. For God in His wisdom has willed that chastity be clearly understood. In order that it may be understood, He has willed that there be no unrestrained lusts, but He has ordered the number and degrees of the persons. And in this life, by manifest penalties, He has universally punished incestuous lusts. We need to know that the laws in Leviticus which prohibit the mixing of persons, as listed there, are laws of nature and are binding on all nations, as the text expressly says that Egyptians and Canaanites are punished for incestuous lusts [v. 24]. Therefore incestuous lusts are prohibited to other nations which were outside of the political domain of Moses.

Young people should learn to enumerate the degrees of consanguinity and affinity.

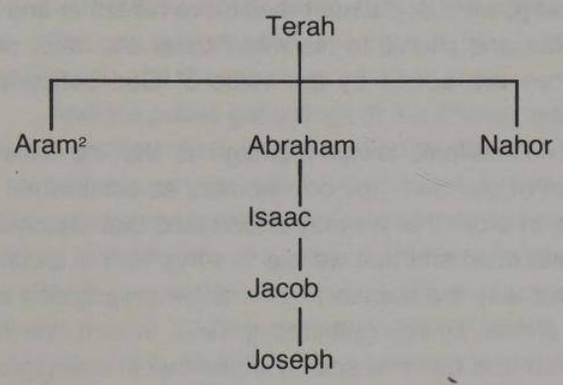
As the lawyers tell us, people are consanguineous or related (*cognati*) if they come from or are propagated from the same source. And consanguinity is a bond which connects persons who are closely joined together in a relationship of blood and nature because of the fact that they have come from the same stem. These are distinguished by lines and degrees.

A line is threefold—ascending, descending and collateral.

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[1] This section is considered an appendix to the *Loci Communes* in the *Corpus Reformatorum*. It was included in the *Loci Communes* edited by Leyser in 1591–92, along with comments on it by Chemnitz. In it Melanchthon deals with several aspects of marriage. Chemnitz commented almost exclusively on the discussion of the forbidden degrees of matrimony. The section appears only in the third editions of the *Loci Communes,* but not in all of them, and only as an appendix when it does appear.

A degree is an interval distinguishing which person is prior in the stem. The customary practice for enumerating degrees at this time and the easier method is that we must begin a series from one stem, such as Abraham, and at the top are placed the elders or the first generation, and below the sons and grandsons, thus: [Genesis 11],



In the lateral line are added brothers and sisters. And three rules are given for distinguishing the degrees.

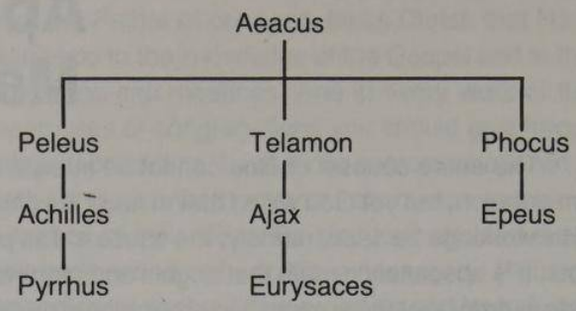
The First Rule Is Given regarding the Direct Line, That Is, the Ascending and Descending Relationships

There are as many degrees as there are persons, minus one.That is to say, subtract the one stem from which the computation is to be begun, as when Joseph is in the third degree from Abraham, Jacob in the second, and Isaac in the first. Thus the son stands in the first degree, the grandson in the second, the great-grandson in the third, and the great-great-grandson in the fourth. With regard to the direct line, the old saying is: No ascending and no descending relatives can contract a marriage between themselves. Thus, if Adam were alive today he could not marry.

The Second Rule, regarding Collateral Relationships

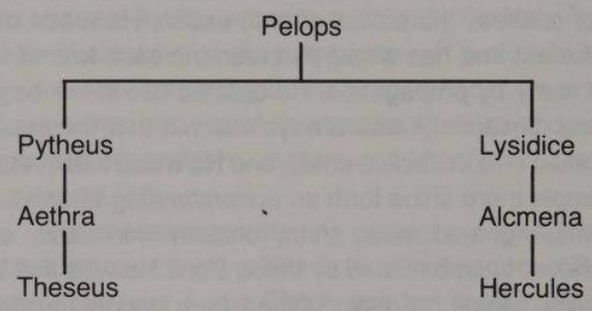
In an equal line of relationship, by the degree that each person is distant from the common stem, by that whole degree are they distant from one another. Thus, two brothers or a brother and a sister constitute only one grade or degree, that is, the first degree, so that Jacob is related to Esau in the first degree.

[2] Melanchthon has Aram instead of Haran, perhaps because he mistook Nahor in Gen. 22:21 to be the Nahor who was Abraham's grandfather, instead of the Nahor who was Abraham's brother. Aram is also similar to Arran, the name for Haran in the LXX of Gen. 11:27.



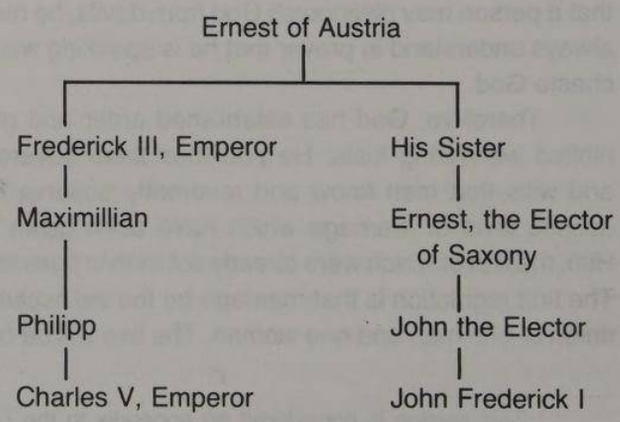
Now, if you want to know in what degree of relationship Achilles and Ajax are joined, look at the first series and note by what degree Achilles is separated from the stem. Now he is in the second degree. Thus Achilles and Ajax are related to each other in the second degree. In this way it is easy to compute the sequences of persons.

Another Example

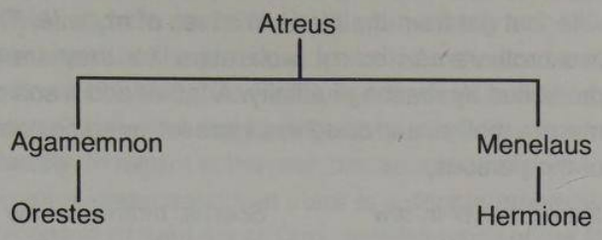


Theseus and Hercules are related through the maternal line, the children of two sisters, related in the third degree.

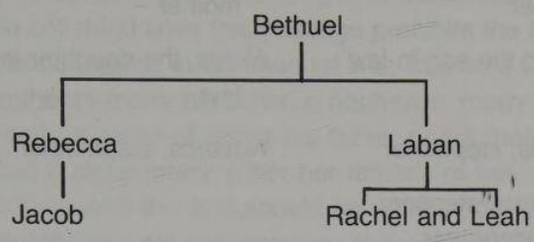
Another Example



Now among these collateral relationships marriages are forbidden to the fourth degree. At one time the marriage of the sons and daughters of brothers was permissible, even under Roman laws, as when Orestes married Hermione, his cousin.

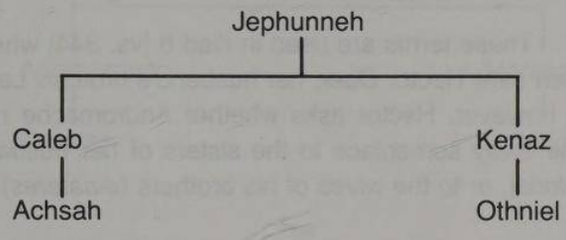


A similar example is found in Genesis.



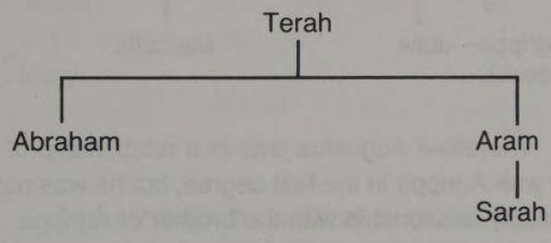
Jacob was married to Rachel, his cousin in the second degree.

Another example

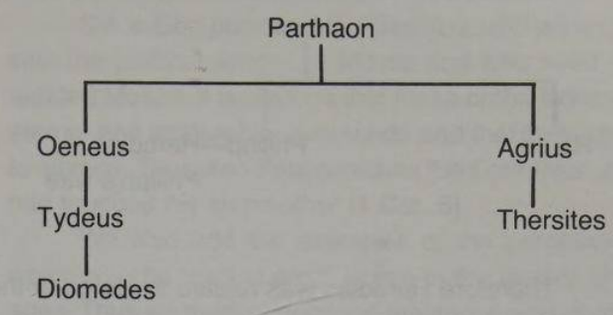


The Third Rule

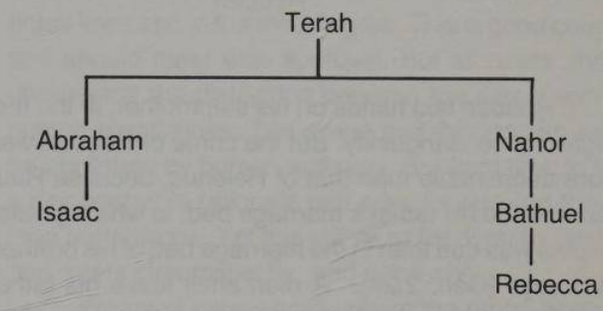
In an unequal line of relationship, to the degree that one part is distant from the stem, to the same degree all persons are distant from one another.



Sarah was in the second degree of relationship with the stem. Therefore she was also related to Abraham by the second degree. Because of this degree in an unequal line, she was forbidden from marriage by divine law, because God has willed universally that greater reverence be given to the superior degree than to the equal degree.



Diomedes was related to Thersites in the third degree in an unequal line.



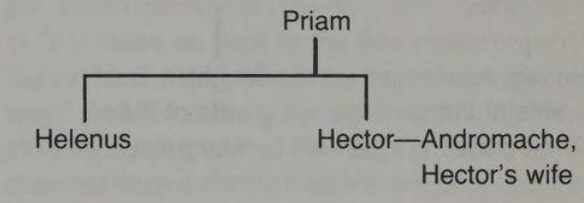
Rebecca was distant to the third degree from the stem. Therefore she was also related to Isaac, or removed from him, in the third degree.

Affinity

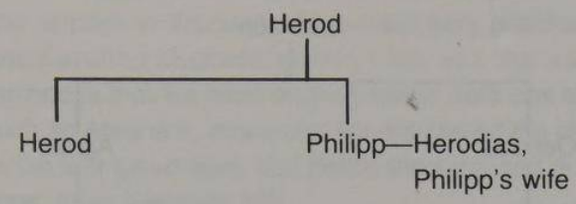
Affinity is the closeness of persons who are not joined together in a fleshly or physical union, as when David is not related to Jonathan, but because he married Jonathan's sister, he then was in an affinity relationship with Jonathan.

The rule is this:

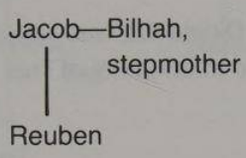
To the degree that a person is of the same blood that I am, to that full degree his wife is in an affinity relationship with me, so that brother and brother are joined in the first degree of consanguinity, and therefore the wife of my brother is related to me in the first degree of affinity.



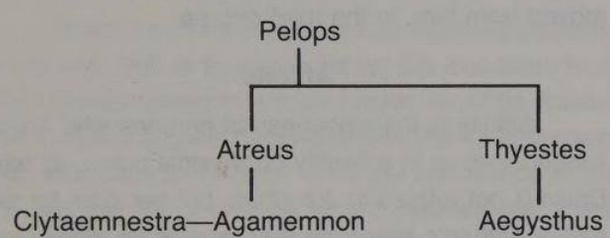
Therefore Andromache was related to Helenus in the first degree of affinity.



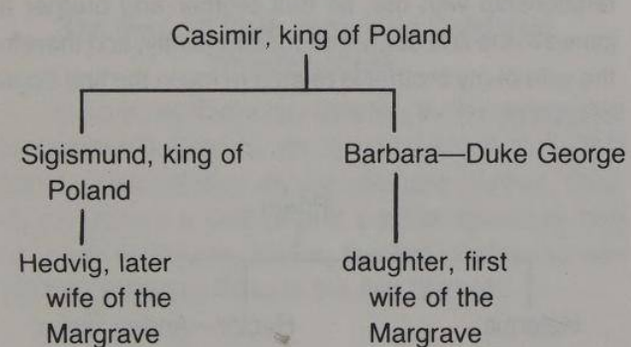
Therefore Herodias was related to Herod in the first degree of affinity.



Reuben laid hands on his stepmother, in the first degree of consanguinity. But the crime of Reuben was more abominable than that of Helenus, because Reuben violated his father's marriage bed, to which greater respect was due than to the marriage bed of his brother, as it says [Gen. 2:24], "A man shall leave his father and his mother and cleave to his wife." And since Reuben was cursed, it is clear that the prohibition against the first degree of relationship is the law of nature.



Aegysthus laid hands on Clytaemnestra, who was related to him in the second degree of affinity.

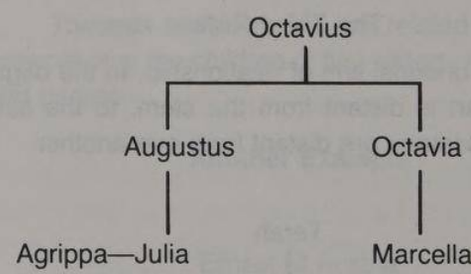


Thus [Hedvig,] the daughter of Sigismund, was a blood relative of the daughter of Duke George in the second degree. Therefore, she was related to the Margrave in the second degree of affinity.

Affinity does not extend widely, for my blood relatives are not related by affinity to the blood relatives of my wife. I must abstain from the blood relatives of my wife, and my blood relatives must abstain from my wife, but not from the blood relatives of my wife. Thus two brothers can marry two sisters, for they are not prohibited by reason of affinity. A father and a son can marry a mother and daughter. Here follow some names of the persons:

Socer, father-in-law	*Socrus,* mother-in-law
Ekuros, father of the husband	*Ekura,* mother of the husband
Pentheros, the wife's father	*Penthera,* the wife's mother
Gener, the son-in-law	*Nurus,* the daughter-in-law
Vitricus, stepfather	*Noverca,* stepmother
Privignus, stepson/ stepdaughter	
Mariti frater, levir, Daer (Greek), husband's brother	*Maciti Soror, Glos, Galōs (Greek),* husband's sister
Duorum fratrum uxores, Einateres (Greek), wives of two brothers	

These terms are used in Iliad 6 [vs. 344] where Helen calls Hector *Daer,* her husband's brother. Later on, however, Hector asks whether Andromache has gone away someplace to the sisters of her husband (*galoōs*), or to the wives of his brothers (*einateres*).



Therefore Augustus was in a relationship of affinity with Agrippa in the first degree, but he was not in an affinity relationship with the brother of Agrippa.

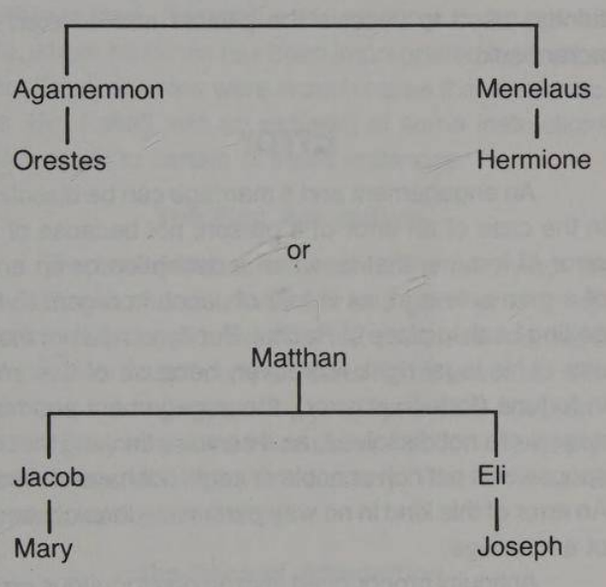
Double Prohibition

This statement has been often repeated and must often be considered: the knowledge of virtues has been transmitted by God to rational creatures in order that they may bear witness that there is a God, and that they may teach what He is like, that He is a judge and punisher. And chastity makes a particularly brilliant distinction between God and the devil. Thus God has sanctioned the order of marriage in order that chastity may be understood. He severely punishes incestuous actions, as, for example, the punishments show which were given to the Sodomites, the Canaanites, Oedipus,

Agamemnon, Aegisthus, Paris, the kings of Egypt, David, and the sons of David. Universally a host of calamities are the penalties for lustful behavior, as it is written Heb. 13:4, "God will judge fornicators and adulterers." Therefore we must be very careful to maintain chastity. In regard to the prohibited degrees of persons, we must understand that there is a double prohibition: the one is of the Law of God, and the other of the law of men.

The divine prohibition is found in Lev. 18, which is understood to prohibit in the direct line the union of all relatives in the ascending and descending line. In the collateral lines this passage prohibits the first and second degree in an unequal line, that is, it forbids a brother to marry his sister, a nephew to marry an aunt who is a sister of either his father or his mother, nor shall a niece marry either her father's or her mother's brother. And this text should be understood regarding degrees and not only persons, as the Jews suggested.

But the law does not prohibit marriages in the second degree in an equal line, that is, it permits the marriage of the children of two brothers [first cousins], as when Orestes was permitted to marry Hermione.



And although the political or civil arrangements of Moses do not pertain to us, yet the rules must be universally observed that the commandments of natural law do pertain to all men and to all times, because they are the immutable norms for righteousness in the mind and will of God. Thus, at the very beginning, in Paradise, the prohibition was set forth regarding the first degree of ascending and descending relationships [Gen. 2:24], "A man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife." And later on, the will of God was explained by the voice of the patriarchs, as when Jacob curses his son [Reuben] who had laid hands on his stepmother [Gen. 49:3, 4]. And the text in Leviticus [18:24] affirms that the Canaanites were punished because of their incestuous lusts.

Since God punished the Gentiles, who were outside the political sphere of Moses and who even antedated Moses, it is obvious that these prohibitions are eternal and immutable commands and that they apply to all men. Thus also Paul punishes the Corinthian who had touched his stepmother [1 Cor. 5].

We also add the examples of the penalties of which we can read at great length in the history of all ages. Thus we must understand that those eras of man did not fare well when they permitted unions of the degrees which are prohibited in Leviticus 18.

We have also added to these divine prohibitions certain human ideas in the closest degrees, so that the divine prohibitions may be reverently observed in the equal lines and in the third degree. This is good counsel and should meet with approval. But all rulers should understand the distinction between the divine and the human prohibitions. The divine prohibitions can never be abolished by human authority. But from time to time a demonstrable rationale can arise for relaxing the human prohibitions. Yet this still must be done by pastors and rulers circumspectly, and not rashly.

We must categorically reject the prohibitions regarding a spiritual relationship, such as that a man cannot marry a woman who has not been baptized. It also pertains to the work of the rulers, in their proper place and after due deliberation, to determine which prohibitions they wish to retain.

The Examples of the Patriarchs

We have seen many people who have seriously neglected the laws of marriage, because they read the different examples of the ancients regarding polygamy and the marriages of Jacob, who married two sisters. We are not to judge by these examples, but by the laws. And in so important a matter, we must give consideration to the divine precepts. It is absolutely certain that the first law regarding marriage was established in Paradise in such a way that it was a union of only one man and one woman. These two will be one flesh, that is, they were inseparably joined together.

Later Lamech departed from this order, and after the flood God tolerated examples among His own people which differed from the first institution. Yet the Son of God takes us back to the first institution when He says in Matt. 19[:8], "From the beginning it was not this way." And He repeats the statement [v. 5], "The two shall be one flesh." And Paul says [1 Cor. 7:4], "A man does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does." Now, since in Leviticus there are prohibitions regarding the degrees, it is necessary to observe these. Nor are we to question how the patriarchs are to be excused, because the saints are not without sins, and we all in all ages have these weaknesses because of the errors and vices of our own eras. Because the patriarchs worshiped God with true worship in the knowledge of their Redeemer and were faithful custodians

of the doctrine, they also excelled in all virtues and otherwise kept a good conscience. Their faults were covered, since at that time they were the political or civil customs of their age.

Consent

It is said in the definition that marriage is a lawful union. This restriction teaches that there is a distinction of persons and it orders the idea of consent.

First, there is the expressed consent of the bride and the groom. The rule often repeated in the law teaches that marriages are contracted by mutual consent. Error and violence must not play any part in this consent. I shall speak later on about error. But in regard to violence we need to know that there is neither consent nor marriage when a person is compelled by force to promise marriage. Because of this many sad errors have been committed.

The Consent of the Parents

The ancient laws so demand the consent of the parents in a marriage that when there is no consent of the parents, before the union takes place the engagement can be rescinded. Ambrose, in discussing the story of Rebecca, insists upon the consent of the parents, and says that this consent is so honorable and so much in keeping with nature that even the poets taught the same thing. He cites the verse from Euripides in his *Andromache* where Orestes seeks to marry Hermione, and the reply is given to him that this is a matter of her father's decision. The verses are: "My marriage—'tis my father shall take thought thereof; herein the decision is not mine" [*Andromache* 987–8].

I shall not prolong the discussion, since it is evident that this practice—that the consent of the parents is required—has survived in the churches of these regions, and engagements are commanded to be dissolved if the parents are opposed. But to the duty of a judge pertains the consideration of whether the parents have a demonstrable reason for withholding consent and when they do not have a probable cause.

We must also recognize that after intercourse has occurred a marriage cannot be rescinded by the authority of the parents, because it is not now a question of a future marriage. The authority of the parents is violated, but there is also the matter of the injury done to the deserted woman.

The Conditions

Some of the conditions are honorable and pertain to the marriage. Some are irrelevant and in no way pertain to the marriage. Others are improper, and others impossible.

The First Rule Is a Perpetual Rule

An honorable condition, one which does pertain to the marriage, is added in the principle of the contract: if there is no consumation, the contract is dissolved. The conditions are like this: once the parents have consented, [it follows that] if you give [my wife] to me, there will be given to you a recompense proportionate to our property. But when intercourse takes place, even if the fulfillment of the expected condition has not taken place, by this act of union we may judge that there is a marriage, because the persons who have come together have disregarded the condition.

The Second Rule

But if there is truly an irrelevant condition which does not pertain to the marriage, such as saying, "I will marry you if you will give me a hundred gold pieces," where the mention of the gift is not clearly understood, this kind of condition is useless and should be pronounced as such before the marriage should be treated as a true marriage. Or there is the condition, "I will marry you if the emperor will wage war against the Turks." It should not be pronounced as a marriage when base or impossible conditions are added, such as "If I find you a virgin." Or again, "I will marry you if you will give me Byzantium." These conditions are rejected as not having been added at all, perhaps because rulers desire to prohibit sophistry and shamefulness used to deceive the pitiable and weaker, ignorant sex.

Error

An engagement and a marriage can be dissolved in the case of an error of a person, not because of an error of fortune, that is, when a deception or an error of a man enters in, as is told of Jacob in regard to his getting Leah in place of Rachel. But Jacob did not make use of his legal right. Moreover, because of this error in fortune (fortuitous error), the engagement and marriage were not dissolved, as if he were thinking that his spouse was not rich or noble or could not have children. An error of this kind in no way pertains to the substance of a marriage.

Antiquity pronounced also on one fortuitous error, namely, that a contract could be dissolved if a free man in ignorance married a slave woman, thinking that she was free. This regulation was entirely political or civil. In our age the ancient custom to slaves has been almost entirely abolished in Europe, so there is no need for a long discussion of this point. But in times gone by, there was reason for the regulation because those born of handmaids were excluded from the line of succession which belonged to the freeborn. But when a free man knowingly took a handmaid, the church would not terminate the marriage, as was the case of the true marriage between Abraham and Hagar.

There is another error, about which there is a rather difficult question. If a person in ignorance marries a woman who has been seduced by another man or who is pregnant by another man, can the engagement

and the marriage be dissolved, as is often requested? This question is often brought up for judgment, but it is judged by the common law that a spouse or a groom should keep the woman who has been seduced by him or by another. Whether he knew about it or not, he should marry her. This possibly has been sanctioned in recent regulations, so that it is not easy to dissolve marriages or to give support to those who cast off their wives very freely and for any kind of excuse whenever they change their mind.

The present practice is well known and there are express statements about it in the canon law. But in Deut. 22[:21] there is a different idea which commands that a woman who has been guilty of adultery with another man is to be put to death by stoning, when following her seduction she has been married to another man as if she were a virgin, if she is accused of this and the man seeks a divorce.

This was the ancient severity of the divine law, which for a while other wiser nations imitated. In a play of Euripides, Ceura when pregnant is wedded to prince Xuthur, and there was born of her Ion, whom his mother exposed as an infant. But after the thing was reported, the mother was afraid of being punished, but the boy was saved by Pallas. And in Terence in his *Hecyra* [The Mother-in-law], Pamphilus is unwilling to accept his wife, whom he thinks has been impregnated by another man. Thus, divorces were in such cases the usual practice. But I shall add an ordering of some instructions which apply to certain of these instances.

The First Admonition

The law of Moses commands the man who has lain with a woman to marry her and give her a dowry, whether he has promised or not promised marriage. But our laws do not compel you to marry a woman who has been made pregnant by you if you have not promised to marry her, but they do make mention of a dowry: either marry her or give her a dowry. This is the same as was practiced in Attica.

The Second Admonition

It is possible that more recent times have departed from the ancient custom, for our law forces a man to keep a woman who has been impregnated by another man, because if it is permissible to accuse a new bride based on suspicions or certain offenses, then innocent women might fall into danger. Often secret sins have been revealed which it is more honorable and more useful to cover up, as the saying goes [1 Peter 4:8], "Love covers all sins." Thus, magistrates have wanted to prohibit accusations. Nor is this counsel to be disparaged.

Now even if I am not bringing in any new regulations, yet it is permissible to say in all humility what seems to be most beneficial. First, we must maintain the idea of reconciliation, so that if a man in error marries a woman who had been impregnated by someone else, he should keep her, especially if she is a decent woman, because many calamities often arise out of a divorce, the reason for which must be considered by the judge and the person involved. But if reconciliation cannot be achieved, a wise judge who has the matter under his authority and whose decision cannot be changed later on, can follow the example of the law of Moses, and give a decision of divorce. For it is well known that the civil laws of Moses do not pertain to our civil affairs, yet it is possible to see in them what God approves.

Therefore legislators in their own position can keep this law in mind, so that in such a case if reconciliation does not first take place, then a divorce may follow. And an error in this area is much more intolerable than if a man marries a handmaid. And we can add other proper reasons also.

But the example of the law of Moses gives more support to our conscience than other arguments do, for lawmakers and judges are made certain by the testimony of the divine law that they are not doing something contrary to the will of God.

Another Case

Often the question is asked concerning this case: Can a man, such as David, who has a wife and lies with another woman, marry the second woman when she is pregnant, even before the spouses have died—while he is married to another woman or she to another man? Canon law forbids a marriage under these circumstances. They likewise forbid, if there is any inclination toward it, the killing of the husband of the other woman. These decrees were drawn up with very good intention, so that adulterers might be kept away from even greater evil. But the example of David shows that in this case a marriage could be permitted and that also in our age a judge might use clemency, especially when civil rulers do not punish adultery, but these irregular unions are displeasing to God.

Another Question

Is it permissible for a Christian to marry a Gentile or heathen, or a dissenter of some kind?

Canon laws forbid marrying a heathen or a heretic, and this has been laid down as a regulation with very good intent. For also the divine law forbade marriage with Philistines [cf. Deut. 7:3; Neh. 13:23–7]. But here it is also necessary to remember the principle rule: the Gospel does not abolish civil ordinances, but it admonishes us about the righteousness of the heart. Meanwhile, in our outward life, it permits us to utilize the civil laws, but not to put them in conflict with the natural laws, just as we utilize the different divisions of the days [of the week]. Therefore Paul expressly commands that Christians are to keep their spouses who wish to remain in the same marriage, even if they have not embraced the same religion [1 Cor. 7:14], "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife."

For the believing person, the use of marriage is pure, that is, it is not displeasing to God, even if the spouse is a dissenter in religion, as it also says [1 Tim. 4:5], "The food is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer," that is, it is agreed that the use of this food is not displeasing to God.

Thus the Christian mother of Augustine remained in her marriage with a heathen husband, indeed a very bitter one, who later on was moved by the pleas and piety of his wife to turn to the acknowledgement of Christ. There are many such well-known accounts in the history of the church, a consideration of which is also useful in our age, so that marriages are not broken up because of religion when the people desire to remain in the marriage, since these marriages are often tragically broken up because of the children. The Christian should be careful in his obedience to keep the good will of his wife, so that this situation does not seem to her to give an occasion for a divorce.

Divorce

We said in the definition that marriage is the lawful and indissoluable union of husband and wife. There is no doubt that these restrictions are all in agreement with one another as it applies to the first institution of marriage. For God has willed that the human race does not wander around in irregular unions like cattle do, but that husband and wife be joined in a definite order, and that by observing this order we render to Him the obedience which we owe to Him. And He has sanctified this order by very severe laws, and punishes with very great punishments the whole human race of all time for any overturning of this order, as shown by the deluge, the destruction of Sodom, Sybaris, Thebes, Troy, and many other nations. And the reason for this severity is that God wills that in the human race the understanding of chastity should be evident, so that we may understand that He Himself is of a pure mind, that He loves chastity, and that by the mention of His virtue we may distinguish Him from the unclean things of nature.

Therefore at the very beginning He sanctified marriage, so that it should not be dissolved, saying [Gen. 2:24], "They shall be two in one flesh," that is, inseparably joined together. For in support of this position the Lord Himself cites this statement in Matt. 19[:5]. And to this precept the first patriarchs, Adam, Seth, and others were doubtlessly obedient and taught this doctrine to others.

But later on the old discipline relaxed and divorce came to be accepted. Even before the time of Moses divorces occurred and were permitted, even by the word of the Mosaic laws. But at the beginning boundaries were set, lest simply private whim become the practice. Instead, cases first were to be handled in courts.

For the law, with remarkable wisdom, also sanctioned or sanctified that a woman who had been divorced should not again marry. For God detests mixing up these lusts.

Among the ancient Greeks in Attica there was the practice that cases of divorce were to be recognized in the courts, but later on among the Jews there came a great permissiveness and license, and divorces took place entirely by private and personal whim, whether there were compelling reasons or poor reasons or no reasons. And women who had been divorced were allowed to remarry, as when Cato gave his wife Marti to the powerful Hortensius, and then after the death of Hortensius, he took her back as his wife. This kind of lack of principle gave occasion for the question raised in Matthew 19. Therefore in this passage the Lord forbade divorce except for one cause, namely, adultery, in which case a person has terminated his marriage and the evil woman must be sent away. Nor is the innocent party the cause of the break-up. Thus the voice of the Son of God frees that person as being innocent. There are also other cases, as in 1 Corinthians 7, regarding a man or woman who deserts.

The Mode of Procedure

Furthermore, divorces are not to take place without the knowledge of the lawful rulers. If the innocent person wants a divorce, he or she must request that the guilty party be called before a judge. Here both parties shall come together and they shall be exhorted to return to each other in mutual favor. If reconciliation does not take place, the innocent party cannot be compelled to overlook the guilt of the other party.

After the parties have been heard and the accusation established, if the accuser is a person who lives an honorable life and asks that the decision be carried out, then the judge shall pronounce thus: Since the guilty person has by his or her evil act dissolved the marriage, the judge by the authority of the Gospel pronounces the innocent person to be free, and he says expressly that the right is given to him or her to contract another marriage with good conscience and in a godly manner.

The papistic canon laws make divorce nominally a non-thing, that is, they do not permit an innocent person to enter another marriage. But since the Gospel in these cases does permit divorce, this should not be understood as applying to something which does not exist, but to the kind of deliverance which divorce actually is, namely, in which the innocent person is not held within the marriage bonds. We note from Origen's commentary on Matthew that this was the practice in the ancient church. Likewise Eusebius in his *Church History,* p. 88, cites Justin Martyr, who writes that a godly woman divorced a husband who was polluted with scandalous lustful sins, and she publicly received a bill of divorce. And Jerome tells the story of a noble matron of Rome who divorced her husband because of his wickedness and married another man. It is useful

to keep these examples in mind to corroborate the practice of our judges in our churches.

If the guilty party does not come before the judge, but either stubbornly remains absent or cannot be found, and the accuser confirms his or her accusation by bringing witnesses who verify the account, then the judge shall pronounce him or her to be guiltless. The innocent party may seek to be liberated, and the judge shall pronounce him or her free, as said above.

But what happens to the condemned party? Is he to be permitted to live in the same place, if he is there?

I reply: It is the responsibility of the civil rulers to punish adultery. Therefore the person who is condemned for this, if he is not punished more severely, should be expelled from those places where the innocent person lives. And the second person, that is, the guilty party, is to be regarded by the innocent party as dead. This degree of severity pertains to the civil ruler.

Who Is the Deserter?

In the question of divorce, the divine Word frees the innocent person, since the other party, by his or her adultery, has dissolved the marriage by adulterating the marriage covenant. And as I have said, when the judgment has been completed, the innocent person is granted the right to enter into another marriage, and this is to be protected in our church consistories in this way. The same kind of protection of the person who has been unjustly deserted is to be guaranteed, for Paul in 1 Cor. 7[:15] says, "If the unbeliever departs, let him depart; and the brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases." Paul expressly pronounces that the person who has been unjustly deserted is free, that is, he or she is not compelled to chase after a wandering deserter.

And although some people restrict this statement to a case of religion, yet it is correct to apply it in a general way to any kind of unjust desertion, since the reasoning is all the same. And in agreement with this is [the fact] that deserters are unwilling to endure the bonds of marriage and then are also unwilling to abstain from other women. But since there are various reasons for moving away, we must limit the definition of a deserter. Nor must we permit a deserted person to marry without the knowledge of the judge.

A deserter is a person who leaves the marriage or is absent for too long a time when no honorable cause compels him or her to be away. Either out of a frivolous nature or an improper unwillingness to keep the marriage bond, or compelled by some other unnecessary reasons, he or she goes astray.

And there are many who are so lacking in natural affection, who are under the influence of devils, that they even neglect their children. This kind of deserter should be publicly punished because of faithlessness and lack of natural affection. It is right to give a property settlement to the innocent person who has been deserted. Furthermore, as I have said, this should come to the knowledge of the judge. Therefore, the deserter should be called to the court. If he or she will not come, testimonies should be heard regarding the character of the innocent party, who should be pronounced as free.

But a person is not a deserter who is absent because of work, as an ambassador or a soldier who is serving under lawful authority in the military, or if with the consent of his spouse a man is absent as a merchant or in some other honorable business.

Nor does captivity give excuse to dissolve a marriage, or deportation, as the law of Alexander Severus in the Codex [book 5, section 17, law 1] regarding the dissolution of marriages states: "A marriage is not dissolved by deportation or by a calamity from water or fire, if the accident into which the husband has fallen does not change the affection of the wife," that is, if there has not been a crime because of which in some way the marriage might be dissolved.

Moreover, in regard to a soldier, the [Institutes] of Justinian in the *Authenticum* states that if in past times during an entire quadrennium a soldier has made no reply to the inquiries of his wife concerning his desires or intentions, the woman should be permitted to enter into another marriage. Justinian condemns the brevity of time involved and says that it is more heartbreaking for a soldier to lose his wife at home while he is off fighting than to be captured by the enemy. Therefore, he lengthened the time and required a careful inquiry regarding the desire of the man. Further, the law speaks of lawful military service and not about frivolous men who are away from home not because of their virtues or their military duty, but who claim to be soldiers so that they can wander more freely. The judge will also consider this distinction.

The Time after Which It Is Permissible to Remarry

If a divorce has taken place because of adultery, no time is prescribed for the innocent party after the legal judgment has been made.

But in a question of desertion it is necessary to consider the years, in order that the person may be understood as really having been deserted, and that the desertion has not simply been deceitfully concocted out of bad faith or lack of serious intent.

The law in the Codex [book 5, section 1, law 2] grants a woman the right to remarry after two years. But if the husband is not outside of the province and does not give his consent to this arrangement, then a public rite of marriage must be deferred for a longer period.

The regulations of the papacy do not even permit remarriage for the innocent party at any time, unless it is evident that the deserting party is dead. But I have cited above the statement of Paul from Corinthians [1 Cor. 7:15] which frees the innocent person, and at the

same time the deserting person becomes guilty of adultery. Therefore, in no way are the innocent parties to be burdened with chains for wrongdoing. But we must also in this case understand that the liberation is not merely an empty word, but that the person who has been liberated from the marriage bonds is permitted to marry.

Justinian expressly permits a deserted person to remarry after ten years. In a gloss in the small chapter "In Our Presence" in the *Decretals* he says, "In cases where after seven years there is demonstrable presumption of the death of the husband, the woman may be excused if she remarries." The gloss is milder than the text. But when the judge has investigated the matter and determined that the complaint about desertion is not a mere pretext, and sees that the morals of the innocent person are upright, he can follow the law of Constantine regarding the four-year waiting period, or the statement concerning a five-year period which appears in the following section under the title "Concerning Divorce."

This moderation of the law does not seem to be unreasonable. Nor will I prescribe a definite period. But a prudent judge will consider both what he needs to teach by way of example, and that undue burdens should not be placed on the conscience of the innocent party.

Impotency

It is a shame even to mention those who absolutely are not suited for the married state and are called impotent [or eunuchs], whether they are this way by nature or have been castrated.

In regard to such people, we need to know that they can never marry. But when the matter of frigidity or inability is being investigated, the judge shall pronounce in the case of such people that they are not free to marry. Nor should it be a matter of divorce, since no marriage has taken place, according to Matt. 19[:5]. But the declaration should be made so that other people may know that this involvement was not a marriage. To the person who has the normal natural powers, legitimate permission should be given to contract a more felicitous union. The laws have established a time for determining frigidity, if there is some doubt about the matter, so that there be no separation before the passing of three years.

In the same way, the judges make pronouncements about those whose natural power is so injured or impaired by either sorcery or poison that it cannot be cured by medical science, if this condition remains for a period of at least three years and the treatments are in vain.

So great is the goodness of some women that they hide the weakness of their husbands. The father-in-law of the very learned man Simon Grynaeus reports that when his first wife died, he married a widow who was a virgin. For eleven years she had been married to a frigid [impotent man], but she had never revealed this fact to anyone prior to the death of her husband.

Divorce because of Cruelty, Poisoning, and Laying Traps Which Endanger Life

Since the text of Matt. 19[:9] makes mention only of adultery, some people strongly contend that a divorce cannot take place because of cruelty or laying life-threatening traps. But in the law of Theodosius (which I believe was written with the careful deliberation of godly men so that in that age they might restrict the practice of divorce to certain cases), divorce is permitted in these cases.

And although some reject this law and contend that this is in conflict with the Gospel, yet they do not correctly understand the distinction between Law and Gospel. The Lord says expressly that in the civil government of Moses divorce was permitted because of the hardness of their hearts [Matt. 19:8]. He is signifying that there is one governance over sanctified people who are members of the church and want to obey the Gospel, and there is another governance—a civil rule—over the ungodly and the contumacious who do not wish to submit to the restraints of laws.

If a man is the kind of husband who torments his wife and, having been admonished by the pastors, he does not cease his raging and upsets the worship of the local church in his home, and treats his wife so cruelly that her life is in danger, this man must certainly be dragged before the rulers of the civil government. The government is obligated not only to protect the life of an innocent person, but also to consider in their own conscience whether this person, after bringing sadness and shame, may also have destroyed worship [or the spiritual life in his home] and committed some other injustice, as has been said, "Let anger be injured more often than patience." In case the cruel person does not belong to the church, the civil ruler would seem to be proper if he used the law of Theodosius.

God wills that civil governments be honorable toward the good and terrifying toward the wicked. God wills that those whose behavior is good are to be protected. They should be given peace for worship, and for the education and raising of their children. God wills that criminals be held in check, whether they practice their criminal behavior at home or abroad. There is never a lack in governments of stubborn, unrighteous, and heartless men who vent their savagery and wickedness on their own families—people whom the Lord in this text called hard-hearted.

Can a Divorce Be Permitted because of Contagious and Incurable Diseases Such As Leprosy?

I reply that it is clear and evident that divorces never can be granted for the sake of diseases, nor may a sick spouse be deserted, because this rule must always remain firm and unmoved [Matt. 19:6]: "Whom

God has joined together, let not man put asunder." Therefore every living person who willfully undertakes a break-up of a marriage without any doubt is committing a terrible sin, just as an adulterer or a deserter undertakes a break-up willfully, and is acting contrary to the order which has been sanctified by God's Word and law. Thus if a person who is entirely healthy endeavors to break up a marriage, he would be like the deserter and the adulterer, and would be guilty of a great sin. For a calamity which might befall living people, even where there is no guilt, is never an excuse to dissolve a marriage contract.

Therefore all the things which have been said that prohibit the dissolution of a marriage should be taught to God-fearing people. For example, Gen. 2]:24] "The two will be in one flesh," 1 Cor. 7[:4] "A husband does not have power over his own body, but the wife does; and a wife does not have power over her body, but the husband does." Eph. 5[:25, 29], "Husbands, love your wives. . . . For no one ever hated his own body, but nourishes and cares for it." Since the marriage covenant remains between people whom guilt and wickedness has not separated, it is manifest that a sick person must not be deserted, and help and kindness is to be showed to him or her, just as a person gives it to his or her own body. The marriage covenant is the highest degree of friendship. It is absolutely immoral, therefore, to desert a friend in time of calamity who needs help and has come for the kindness and trustworthiness of his or her friend. Therefore, the desertion of one's spouse because of some calamity, in which there is no guilt, is an unjust and criminal act.

But some people cruelly argue that leprosy is similar to death. Under this pretext they are anxious to support the person who is in good health. But its plain heartlessness refutes this sophistry. The dead do not need the help of other people, but the sick person still needs human help. Therefore, what pertains to the duty of true friendship is not like the duty toward the dead. There still is your flesh, there still is the divine law proclaiming to you [Eph. 5:29]: "No one hates his own flesh." A healthy person must be compelled even by the authority of the rulers not to desert the sick spouse or neglect her life, but he must take financial care of her. And even if it seems to some that this is a stern sentence, yet all honorable minds understand that it is right and just. And if a godly husband needs advice, let him ask his pastors who are learned and serious men who rightly understand the teaching of the church. For they can answer him so that he is not caught in perplexity of conscience, and so that his faith and his worship life are not hindered while he is seeking answers to his questions.

The Betrothal of Children before the Age of Puberty

Much here involves the correct understanding of the ancient law. Antiquity spoke of betrothal only as those promises in which a compact was made regarding a future marriage and which were in no way the beginning of a present marriage, as when a betrothal was arranged between the youth Octavius and Servilia, who was still a little girl. In that case there was only the discussion of a marriage which was to take place sometime after the words spoken at the present time.

The ancient laws speak of these betrothals and say that they can be dissolved at the will of the parties, as when Octavius did not marry Servilia. We must note carefully how antiquity spoke. A later era has created ambiguity. It speaks of some betrothals in the future sense. Others are in the present sense, when the contract promises in express words that a marriage is a present reality or a categorical fact, and that this is now the true beginning of the present marriage.

Furthermore we must prudently consider what future betrothals are. We must not make judgments on the basis of arguments over words, but on the basis of many external circumstances, as to whether the parties want to establish something which cannot be changed in the future, except for a very serious reason which might at that time give cause to change things.

There are indeed betrothals for the future. All are promises, to which honorable conditions may be added which are subject to judgment, such as the expression, "I will marry you if our parents give consent." We have said above that such promises are null and void if the condition is not satisfied.

There are also betrothals for the future, when by name a little child is promised by its parents or guardians to be betrothed to another immature child by marriage contract when they reach a suitable age. But since they are not old enough, or the other party is not yet of suitable age, the promise is made of a future marriage.

Betrothals of this kind can certainly be dissolved when the young people themselves do not want the marriage. Nor must a person who refuses the marriage be forced into it, if she or he has not consented to it at a proper age, when later they are of a mature enough age for marriage and can make a decision by their own judgment.

Moreover, just as men in many other respects misuse good things, so also under the shadow of marriage there is often a pretext for foolish and selfish desires, often because of money. Thus these marriage contracts are arranged for children, when in fact in a covenant of so great importance as a life-long marriage, the honorable judgment and the mutual good will of both parties who are being married ought to be required, and they should be beyond question. It is not fitting that the bodies of our children be sold for money or other greedy purposes. And God punishes the perversion of this order with manifest penalties. Therefore when honorable parents consider the divine order and properly consider the salvation of their sons and daughters, they should not compel their sons and daughters

to enter into marriages which are contrary to the inclination of their nature, from which they recoil, and in which they may be moved by very serious reasons. Where there is not mutual love on the part of the couple, discord will hurt minds, hinder the worship of God, disturbe the whole household regimen, and produce many sins. Meantime, when peoples' wills are being thwarted, and adulteries and punishments will follow in which many people will run into new wickedness and total calamities.

Especially the parents should consider these immeasureable evils if they are in any way able to comprehend them, and they should beware that such things do not befall theirs sons and daughters. They should pray to God with ardent prayers, and then they themselves should take care so that they do not accept foolish and ungodly ideas.

In many of their deliberations about the marriages of their children, there is nothing but neglect and indifference on the part of the parents. Hence, afterwards there are the most tragic calamities. The families become not the churches of God which they ought to be, but dens of devils. Many wretched people in these tragedies fall into hatred toward God, hopelessness, and eternal destruction.

I pray God, the eternal Father or our Lord Jesus Christ, the creator of the human race and the guardian of upright society among men, that He would guide us and bring it about that our marriages and families truly are churches in the home, where they properly worship Him and obey Him in maintaining the order which He has established, and that He not allow worship and other necessary duties to be hindered by domestic discord.

The Ruler's Duty to Uphold the Laws of Marriage

It is absolutely certain that the salutary guidance of God is needed. And it is manifest that God has instituted the arrangement among mankind that there be a ruler for the people. And to these rulers God has given four primary tasks. The first is that the ruler shall speak the word of the divine law in maintaining discipline, because the first and inviolate norm for living must be the law of God. The second is that he be a vigilant guardian of God's law, so that by the severity of punishments he may control and punish the disobedient and defend the obedient. God thus has sanctioned this order and it is clear that laws are despised when there are no examples of punishments, just as Demosthenes praises the dictum of Aeschines, "There is no help for the government which does not have bowstrings to use against evildoers." The third duty is that the ruler can add certain laws to the law of God which however in no way differ from the divine law but which are supports so that the divine laws may be maintained for more important matters. The fourth duty is to maintain these laws with severity.

The ruler should consider these duties also in the protection of marriage. They should know how to govern with the most severe commands of God, so that they may uphold the laws of marriage and punish adulterous, wild, and incestuous lusts, and remove from among the people those dreadful monsters of evil which both arouse the wrather of God and pollute the human race with their loathsome outpourings of lust. For it is absolutely certain that God is terribly angered at both torrents of lust and at the neglect of the governments which do not punish them and who do not remove these guilty people from the midst of the public. And because of these crimes many public penalties make their way among the human race, such as wars, devastations, destructions of people, and other great calamities, as demonstrated by the examples of the Sodomites, the Canaanites, the tribe of Benjamin, the exiles of David, the destruction of Troy, and countless others. Therefore the divine Word says in Lev. 18[:28] regarding incestuous persons, "Beware, lest the land vomit you out if you do similar things, just as it vomited out the Canaanites," And expressly it commands the rulers that they shall remove these evil monsters, saying [v. 29], "Every person who commits any of these abominations shall be cut off from among their people."

The commands are repeated many times, just as the command regarding adulterers is said again in Deut. 22[:22], "If a man sleeps with the wife or another man, both shall be killed—the adulterer and the adulteress—and you shall remove the evil from Israel." Furthermore, it is very regretable that in many places the ruler in so important a matter is very dilatory, and this neglect stirs up the wrath of God, and thus the penalties pile up against the human race, as we see in the story of the tribe of Benjamin, which was almost entirely destroyed because they were unwilling to punish the rape of the Levite's wife [Judges 19].

For it is most certain that God punishes all wild lusts, even when the rulers permit them, for the chastity and righteousness of God are not moved and He always keeps this rule [Heb. 13:4], "God will punish fornicators and adulterers." Although for the sake of His Son He mitigates his punishments to those who repent, as when He did not allow David to die and did not kindle His total wrath, as the Psalmist says [Ps. 78:38], yet consider how great a mountain of penalties there was. Families were contaminated by incestuous unions, sons quarreled among themselves, and a father was driven into exile. A son and a great number of citizens were killed because of a rebellion which was created. The royal mothers who were beloved by God were corrupted by the crime of the sons. The hideous sins of David were even sadder than his physical death was going to be. But in both cases God showed that He was angry against wickedness and that He punishes it, and yet He snatches out of the jaws of eternal death

those who flee to His Son, the mediator, upon whom even the greatest sins have been laid, which is the price of our deliverance.

This teaching concerning penalties and repentance must be known by all. And rulers must be urged and entreated to remember their duty under the command of God, to understand that God is chaste and righteous, and that they have been put in the position of divine service so that they may be the image of God, that they may be chaste and upright, and uphold chastity and righteousness among the people.

These duties are God-pleasing and salutary for both rulers and people.

In many areas the civil rulers are very negligent in upholding chastity because to a great degree they have turned this concern over to the responsibility of the bishops. But other matters which are also contrary to God's norm have been turned over to the ecclesiastical authorities, and their regulations hinder proper penalties, because the ecclesiastical authorities are not armed with the sword. Besides, since the judges themselves are often contaminated by unrestrained lusts, they are less angry with similar wrongdoings, as Aristotle cites from Euripides, "Evil people take pleasure in evil things, and a bad man helps another bad man." In the meantime they steal money from poor women. God holds such judges only in derision.

Therefore it is right that judicial regulations should be established regarding marriages. Civil government should call upon learned and honorable men chosen out of the whole body of the church. When these men have investigated and fully understood all these matters, they should pronounce judgment. In recommending punishments, they should be the ministers of God. They should remove from society all those who are corrupted by being involved in things that are contrary to nature, such as incestuous men, adulterers, rapists, deserters, adulteresses, and women who desert their husbands, lest God, because of these crimes and the negligence of the rulers, destroy whole cities and nations.

Honest rulers should also demonstrate their love for chastity in their defense of marriage. They should do away with the ungodly and diabolical laws of the bishops regarding the celibacy of priests, and permit a godly marriage to all who are suited for this kind of life, in keeping with the law of God, [1 Cor. 7:2], "Let each man have his own wife for the sake of avoiding fornication."

And since the ruler is the image and minister of God, he should love chastity, since he knows that God is of a chaste mind and most severely demands that the order of chastity be upheld for the sake of His established order. The ruler must not be the image and minister of the devil, who in his hatred drives miserable men so that they are polluted with a torrent of lusts, so that the wrath of God is increased and this miserable creature lives in even greater shame, and afterwards falls into eternal destruction. The devil aids and abets all these frightful ravings, which augment the wandering lusts in every possible way, either by the defense of the papal law regarding celibacy, or by the neglect of punishments. In this present life the shamefulness and enormity of these crimes is not yet sufficiently recognized, but enormous crimes have been covered up until the last judgment, when God will show to all angels and men the shamefulness of sin and the malice of the devils. But yet in this life honorable and godly rulers must consider on the basis of the situation the will of God, and direct their government according to the law of God. To the greatest degree possible they should be concerned that sins and punishments do not pile up, as is said in Isaiah 10[:1], "Woe to those who write unjust laws."

I pray that the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who was crucified and raised for us and who truly loves chastity and a chaste marriage, will Himself turn the minds of all who call upon Him toward chastity. May He defend the laws of marriage and restrain the devils, who in hatred for God try to drive wretched mankind to pollute themselves in various ways and finally perish. The weakness of human nature increases in this world as it grows older. At the same time, the raging of the devils increases because they know that judgment stands near, when their shamefulness will be clearly revealed to all angels and men. Therefore, O Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, You who have been crucified and raised for us, I pray that You will govern our youth, rule our families, guide them toward chastity and the true invocation of the eternal Father, and turn our hearts by Your Holy Spirit. Amen.



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